3 0516 21 4623

Island India

Augusta de Wit.

ST. THOMAS COLLEGE
LIBRARY

WITHDRAWN
UST
Libraries

ISLAND-INDIA

Published on the
Kingsley Trust Association Publication Fund
Established by the
Scroll and Key Society of Yale College

Tidore and Ternate

ISLAND-INDIA

BY

AUGUSTA DE WIT

with Cover Design and Illustrations by
Ten Klooster

NEW HAVEN
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS
LONDON : HUMPHREY MILFORD : OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
MDCCCCXXIII

COPYRIGHT 1923 BY
YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . . *vii*

Foreword . . . . . *xi*

Glossary . . . . . *xii*

The Music of Island-India *1*

The Three Women in the Sacred Grove . . *3*

A Native of Java *29*

Encounters at Sea *40*

The Hunter *49*

The Vigil by the Bridge *59*

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Tidore and Ternate	*Frontispiece*	
Papuan Girl	*Facing page*	*2*
Sameerah	" "	*12*
Sameerah in the Sacred Grove	" "	*20*
The Sea	" "	*38*
Booroo	" "	*46*
The Hunter	" "	*50*
The Bridge	" "	*62*
New Guinea	" "	*72*
The Isle of Pirates	" "	*88*
The Bandjir	" "	*98*

INTRODUCTION

THE public is aware that publishers do not invite introductions from persons unsympathetic with the author, and I will admit at once that I received a quite singular pleasure when *The Hunter,* one of the sketches in this volume, was printed some years ago in the *Yale Review,* and that I heard with enthusiasm of the intention of the Yale University Press to lure Miss de Wit on to write of her native islands until there should be enough material for a book. With the understanding then that I am here to praise my author, and not, if I can help it, to bury her, let me try to say why I enjoy her so much.

As far as my knowledge of literature goes these sketches are something absolutely new. Of course the islands of the Southern Pacific happen to be a theme of the hour, but it would be absurd to compare the cheerful journalism of (for instance) O'Brien's books with the deep knowledge and amazing technique of Miss de Wit. Far to the westward of O'Brien's haunts loom the great islands of the Indies, set in their shallow seas where Conrad's ships go to and fro. By way of equipment for her task Miss de Wit went so far as to be born in the islands, where her father was Resident first of the Western Coast of Sumatra and later of Timor. Readers of Conrad will remember that it was in a port of Timor that poor Morrison's brig was seized by the authorities and saved by Heyst; I feel it due to the memory of Resident de Wit to remark that Timor is half Portuguese, and that it was in the Portuguese harbor of Deli that this scandalous abuse of power occurred.

Miss de Wit received her education in Europe, returning more than once to the islands, and years later, after her family had come to Holland to live, she spent three years in travel in the Indies, visiting all the greater islands—Java, Bali, Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, the Moluccas, Timor, the Lesser Sundas, New Guinea—and many of the smaller ones. These lands are all held by Conrad, in fealty to Apollo. What foothold has he left for other explorers?

But Conrad himself does not give us the island people on their mer-

its; they are a background for the action of his whites; or when, as in *Karain,* the tale is of a brown man, it is seen through white men's eyes. In Miss de Wit's sketches this background is moved forward; its details become clear; it is itself full of movement and action; it no longer gets its values from the white man's purposes; it is a world by itself with its own history and laws. I question whether such an illuminating study of the brown man's soul has ever been made by a white. It is as packed with observed ethnological detail as *The Golden Bough,* but to my sense there is no more pedantry in it than in *Babbitt.* Miss de Wit is as rigorous a behaviourist as any of our young photographic novelists; her romance lies in her subject matter. It is more romantic—to us—to observe a rhinoceros as a Malay hunter does than to observe a commercial travellers' dinner as a commercial novelist does. But the method is the same. A critic who does not on the whole like Miss de Wit's work speaks of it nevertheless as "an incomparably rare and precious deposit of facts, traditions and memories bearing on the deepest spiritual realities in the life of the people of Java." Like all sound ethnology, hers helps us to see how uniformly men act. The Malay boys cage crickets as Theocritus saw Greek boys do; the bells of the Tjikidool reproduce the drum-talk of *Batouala;* their voices furnish to the instructed ear a topographical map of the district as the night wind on Egdon Heath revealed its covering of tree and herb.

The style the author has chosen to convey her invaluable knowledge is of so high and unusual an artistic quality that one's appreciation of it is a complicated thing, hard to express. To me it seems intentionally and successfully symbolic of two main elements in her picture. First, its slow movement, its piling up of fruit upon fruit and flower upon flower, its solidity breaking constantly into vivid light and swift motion, its recurrent suggestion of something formidable, unseen, behind a screen of lovely leafage, gives a really uncanny impression of the jungle. Second, in its patience, its symmetry, its sureness, the unfailing success with which an involved pattern works itself brilliantly out, its richness, its essential simplicity expressed in splendid materials, it is the art of the batik worker in *The Three Women in the Sacred Grove;* it is the soul of the people she is describing.

The author's English is in itself a masterpiece. As one reads it envi-

ously one admits that perhaps a foreigner has always a better chance of clean work in a given tongue, if he has mastered it, than those born to it, because its singularities arrest him and its root-meanings, dulled for them, shine out and take his eye. Miss de Wit uses English with a sacramental sense of its values. I venture to say that no one who is seriously writing English to-day could fail to be both abashed and inspired by this example of its possibilities. She is well known in Holland as a novelist and essayist; her critical use of her own language and her command of French and German have helped her to know English. These various vocabularies, instead of fusing and losing their edges, seem to enhance her interest in each, as a traveller with various coinages in his purse pays them out with a careful attention not cultivated in a pocket where the only distinction is between a nickel for the subway and a dime for the bus. Apart from the distinction of her English style, its mere correctness is a miracle.

The sense of beauty and the sense of style in these sketches are in the service of a passion for the people of the islands and a dread of the devastating white influence. Like other passions, this one is most effective when least directly expressed. For this reason I prefer *The Vigil by the Bridge* to *A Native of Java*. It is not only a feeling for artistic logic, an adhesion to form, that makes Miss de Wit's similes exclusively such as would arise in a brown man's mind; the paths of the terraced hillside come down "as daintily and carefully as"—ladies dancing?—no, as "women planting rice." By this method she blazes away with both barrels, so to speak, and we get two glimpses instead of one of what she is trying to show us; but by it she also achieves her deeper object, of placing us and keeping us at the brown man's point of view.

Miss de Wit's style is not restful; it is as exciting as one's first flight in an airplane. Can we trust the pilot? heavens, that was a steep bank, —shall we ever straighten out? But soon confidence comes. This is a practised hand at work among the controls. Many people dislike the sporting element in style. They like to have a sentence begin in such a way that they can predict its close for themselves; they feel almost a moral looseness in the reckless divorce decreed by such writers as Miss de Wit between certain nouns and adjectives which it seems as though

God had joined together. Well, the world is full of words arranged for them. But even they, I think, may be seduced by the inescapable charm of beauty into reading *Island-India.*

EMILY JAMES PUTNAM.

FOREWORD AND GLOSSARY

THE crescent-shaped group of islands constituting the Netherlands East Indies is in poetical style called "Insulind," which name the present writer has ventured to translate as "Island-India."

The population, which amounts to about forty millions, consists of Malays of various tribes, those of the eastern part of the Archipelago being mixed with Papoo elements. Several degrees of civilization are represented, from the ancient Hindoo culture, overlaid with Mahometanism, of Java and parts of Sumatra, down to the semi-savagery of the eastern islets and the coast of New Guinea. The small island of Bali, separated from Java only by a narrow strait, is remarkable as the last refuge of Hindoo culture. In the rest of the Archipelago, so far as it is civilized, Mahometanism prevails. The confession of El Islam, however—and this holds equally true of the Hindoo religion of the Bali folk—is no more than a thin veneer over the original animism of the Malay tribes, as it may still be observed in its unadulterated forms in the whole of the eastern part of the Archipelago and in New Guinea. The principal means of subsistence is agriculture, which in Java, Sumatra, and parts of Borneo and Celebes takes the form of the growing of rice, whilst on the eastern islets maize is grown, together with several kinds of plants having edible roots; and in the parts least civilized sago is the chief food—the marrow of the sago-palm tree, which grows there wild.

From a colonial point of view Java (which also is by far the most densely populated of the islands, having about thirty millions of inhabitants) is the most important part of the Archipelago, being one of the world-centres of sugar production. Sumatra comes next. Comparatively neglected and unknown up to the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it has since come to the front, owing to the new tobacco industry of Deli and to the discovery of great mineral riches—petrol on the east coast, coal, silver, and gold in the interior. Both the mining districts and the plantations have attracted international capital and, as a consequence, an international contingent of colonists. The Moluccas,

which were the most important part of the colony in the times of the East India Company and the spice trade, have since sunk into insignificance. The coast of New Guinea is practically a recent acquisition.

The proportion of non-natives to natives is about two per cent.

Of these two per cent the large majority are "alien Orientals"; *i.e.*, Chinese, Japanese, Arabs, Bengalese, et cetera.

Hollanders and other Europeans of various nationalities represent only one third of one per cent of the population.

The system of Dutch colonial government originated and developed in Java and was determined in its growth by the characteristics of this environment. It is based upon the alliance of the ruling race with the upper classes of the native population—the landed, the moneyed, and the educated.

The close of the last century was marked by a policy which stabilized the authority of government, practically nominal up to that date, in several of the more outlying parts.

The changes initiated by the World War throughout the Orient have likewise affected the Malay Archipelago, more especially Java and the east coast of Sumatra.

The impressions and experiences contained in this book were gathered previous to that date.

GLOSSARY

Adat	ancient custom having the force of a law.
akar-wangi	plant having fragrant roots, used for perfumery.
alang-alang	a species of grass growing to a height of eight to ten feet.
angkloong	musical instrument consisting of a graduated series of bamboo tubes, which, when shaken to and fro, produces a sound like the clucking of water.
badjoo	man's jacket.
bandjir	sudden flood.
batik	a technique of painting on cotton or silk: the pattern being overlaid with a thin layer of molten wax, which the batikker pours from a small goblet-shaped ladle the size of an acorn, the tissue is immersed in the dye which is to form the ground-colour. Then, for each single colour of the design, the wax is removed from the corresponding parts, and, the ground-colour being

overlaid with wax, the tissue is immersed in the new dye. Thus, with alternate laying bare and covering up again, every part of the design is impregnated with the colour required. The effect is extremely beautiful. Within the last few years European art schools have been endeavouring to adapt batik designs and technique to the requirements of Western art, in many cases with marked success.

dalang conductor of the gamelan orchestra, and at the same time a performer on the principal instrument, a graduated series of bronze or copper gongs. Also, the conductor of the wayang (the puppet-theatre), who recites the drama represented by the puppets. Generally these dramas are ancient epics; but sometimes the dalang recites verses of his own making, in the manner of an improvisatore.

djati teak-tree.

djelootong rubber gathered from a species of ficus-tree frequent in the marsh-forests of Borneo.

dookoon midwife: medicine man.

gamelan orchestra, the principal instrument of which is a graduated series of gongs.

Gandaroowah a mythical being, half man, half bird, the Steed of Shiwa.

Hadji title given to those who have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca.

kabayah woman's jacket.

Kandjeng Lord.

kraton palace.

mandoor overseer.

modin official of the mosque.

pamor a white alloy of silver and other metals.

pasanggrahan small hotel maintained by the Government for the convenience of civil servants on official journeys; it may also be made use of by any traveller.

passar market, held once in five days.

pantoon rhyming couplets.

Patih native official.

pisang banana.

Priaji title of lesser nobility.

rebab the Persian violin.

Radhèn title of nobility. Radhèn-Ayoo: the corresponding female title.

Regent Native Chief of a Province. The office exists solely in Java. It

is conferred almost exclusively on members of noble families, in which it is practically hereditary. A Regency is a province having a Regent at the head.

Resident Dutch Chief of Province. The Regent is officially styled "the Resident's Younger Brother."

sarong skirt-like garment, worn by both men and women.

sawah irrigated rice-field. The hillsides of the islands of the western part of the Archipelago are fashioned into sawahs, flights of terraced fields, irrigated from top to bottom by running water, which forms small ponds within the dikes surrounding the fields, and descends in little cascades from one to another. The water is turned on after the rice-seedlings have been transferred from the sowing-plot to the sawahs. The young plants grow up in the water. The rice of the dry fields, the tegal, is far inferior to the rice grown upon the sawah, both in quality and in quantity.

slendang a long scarf worn by women, draped diagonally from shoulder to hip. The everyday slendang is used for carrying burdens. A mother carries her young child in the slendang. Slendangs made of fine silk and ornamented with batik work are the array of the rich.

Tooan Sir, Lord. The title is, in some places, also given to women. Tooan Besar: Great Lord; properly, the Governor General, but customarily the local chief authority is spoken of as the Tooan Besar; and in many places the director of a sugar-mill or a plantation is addressed thus by natives.

tookang artisan. Tookang pantoon, reciter of verses, who often accompanies his recital with music, half singing to the instrument in a sort of monotonous recitative.

warong primitive restaurant by the roadside.

wayang the Javanese puppet-theatre. The puppets, whether sculptured in wood or cut out in leather—in which latter case a severely conventional style is maintained, with sharp contours and angles resembling those of lengthening shadows—are manœuvred by the dalang against a screen of white canvas, whilst he recites the drama, generally taken from some ancient epic. There is a kind of wayang, however, the Wayang Wong, in which actors take the place of the puppets. Wayang performances often last for twenty-four hours and even longer. According to tradition the men should sit on that side of the screen where the puppets, the

women on that side where the shadows on the transparent screen, are seen. This tradition, however, is often disregarded.

Wedana official of a rank below that of Patih.

"To eat earth." The eating of earth is the solemn confirmation of a vow.

THE MUSIC OF ISLAND-INDIA

WHEN Cornelis de Houtman's fleet entered the Moluccan Seas—the adventurers' eyes grew fierce with desire as they saw the hill-crested island, the world's spice-garden, rise blue against the purple dawn—there floated toward them a music most melodiously merry, breathing out of the unseen. It seemed as if it were the sea itself that sang.

Astounded, the men listened, all unwillingly, mistrustful.

"What witchery is this?"

But from the crow's-nest the little midshipman cried out, "Brown folk are coming in boats, sounding flutes and beating drums!" And out of the blurred green of wooded cliffs and islets there glided forth the flotilla of orembays surrounding the princely barge with its forty rowers seated on the ribs of its broad-spread wings. It carried a multitude of musicians and bearers of garland-decked gifts, in the midst of whom shone the Island-King.

De Houtman kept his hand on his sword-hilt as he listened to salute and felicitation and to the Sultan's prayer, proudly humble, for the Hollander's aid against the cruel Spaniard, the robber of spice, the enslaver of free men, the murderer of peaceful folk.

With the semblance of a smile he gazed after the islanders as, gladdened by his warily worded promise, they conducted his ships toward the safe anchorage, making music to the rise and fall of their oars.

His companions-at-arms stood appraising the Sultan's gifts of honour and welcome, earnest of booty untold; in baskets gracefully woven were heaped-up cloves that quickened the languid air with a sweet pungency; plumage of birds of paradise that was like sunbeams and moonshine intermingled and radiance of darting flames; regal ornaments, curiously wrought, resplendent with diamond, ruby, and sapphire. No one heeded the music. But the lad in the crow's-nest had slid down the mast, and hanging a garland golden and starrily white about his shoulders and thin young neck, he set off capering, twinkling along the deck barefooted, arms flung aloft, and fingers snapping to the beat of the frolicsome music.

The flute-players and the drummers in the Sultan's barge, smiling, played all the more merrily. The boy, smiling back, waved his hands at them.

Three hundred years and more have gone by since then.

Tens of thousands from that day to this have gone the wave-way to Island-India, which Cornelis de Houtman opened to them, seeking the things that he sought, power and wealth. And still the music meets them that met the first adventurers' ships, the music that simple hearts do make in concert with sea and earth and sun, merry at times, and at times mournful, melodious always. And still the many heed it not, being busy with things that to them seem weighty. But the child hears and the poet; and, hearing, they rejoice or mourn, fraternally.

Papuan Girl

THE THREE WOMEN IN THE SACRED GROVE

IF the country-folk around Sangean hold in reverence the wood upon the steep hillside and believe it to be the haunt of nymphs and good genii, it is for the sake of the God-fearing prince who, many centuries agone, lived there a hermit, and whose tomb, as tradition has it, is the moss-grown mound on the skirt of the wood, between a clear well and a white-flowering kambodja thicket that strews the mound with its lustrous and fragrant chalices. The verses which the dalang, the poet-musician of Sangean, sings about him of an evening when many listeners are gathered about the flickering oil wick that illumines the manuscript—the children on the sleeping-mat in the dark corner stay awake to listen, the tale is so beautiful—say that he was a mild and gracious king over the many nations which his armies had subjected to his rule, and that from early youth upward he willed well and did well toward as many as approached him. But when he had reached the noon-height of his sun-like life, he forsook wealth, rule, and glory, and chose a hermit's life, for the sake of perfection. For well he knew, this man of most noble understanding, that the truth concerning the soul and the world and very virtue is not attainable by the man who is a lord over other men, and who never, as fellow-in-work and fellow-in-joy and fellow-in-sorrow of those whom yet God created his fellows, may build heart to heart together with them at the ever fairer edifice of the world.

When, therefore, he had given his last counsels to his son, and had laid his son's son, whom the women brought to him, back again on the breast of the palely smiling mother, blessing him, he said, "Fare ye well!" to his faithful vassals, his victorious captains, and his well-tried counsellors, and left his splendid palace, followed of none, woman nor servant; for in the utmost shadow of the gate he, with an inexorable gentleness, had put aside the weeping ones who embraced his feet and pressed against their foreheads the hem of his poor garment. A little rice and salt, which he begged at the gate of a village, and water,

dipped up out of a brook in the halved shell of a cocoanut, were fare enough for him on the journey to the hill-wood of Sangean, where a dream had shown him as his abode the spot between a kambodja thicket and a clear well.

Here he built himself a hut of branches and woven leaves. The fruit of the forest was his food, the water of the well his drink, thinking upon mankind and the world his life. He considered the many experiences of his life, the teachings of the wise, the songs of the poets, and words heard from children at play and from women who thought themselves unwatched. And whatsoever he perceived in the forest, by night or by day, the budding and the flourishing and the fading of the leafage, the blooming in the morning dew of blossoms, and the ripening of fruit and its wondrous perishing unto a new existence, and the life of the many animals, the strong ones and the timid, upon the ground, and in the branches the merry birds—all this too he considered well; and, that he might understand the law of their movements, he observed the powers that encompass and rule the earth and all lives thereon, the sky and the sun, the stars, the clouds, the rain, and the wind. As the shuttle which an able weaver throws forward and backward through the tense threads of her loom—threads it was, silk it grows to be—even so his thought moved forward and backward through things seen and remembered—things it was, wisdom it grew to be. The rumour went through all the land: "The great King lives as a hermit in the wood of Sangean!"

Then the many came to him who had not dared to approach him in the days of his power and glory. They begged wisdom of him—knowledge concerning what is good and concerning the right way of living. And he gave to every one according to his need and to the measure of his understanding. There came no one so darkened in thought, so sore with hatred, so wearied by manifold erring, but he went back walking lightly, his eyes ashine, and his hands longing to caress and to give; pure and mild as the water of the well he felt his heart within him. And thus, for many months and for many years, many hundreds and many thousands came sad and went away rejoicing, until, one morning before sunrise, first comers found not the hermit, but only his body, pale and transparently thin as a fallen petal.

All the people digged his grave and built his mound, every one desir-

ing for himself, no one grudging any one else, the pious honour of doing an only and last service to him who had served all by his wisdom and gentle virtue. As they laid him to rest they remembered and repeated his words, remembered the grace and pleasantness that had come thereof, peace of heart in sorrow as in gladness, and sweet security of fraternal life in labour as in pleasure; so that enemies forgot the evil they had planned to do unto each other, and mighty ones promised redress to the poor man they had oppressed, and such as sorrowed over an unforgettable loss felt a new strength arise in their hearts and were lonely no longer.

Then it seemed to them that the well-beloved one had not altogether departed. Some rays of his soul's light still shone on the spot of his dwelling and of his long rest. Henceforth, even as hitherto, whosoever came in longing won his blessing, and his grave was sought by pilgrims as for many years his cell had been.

So it is even at this present day. Longing ones come, each with his own longing, for great and permanent things the one, for small things the other. The shepherd boy who rears a singing-dove for the match—secretly, for his father frowns when he sees the child standing head on one side, listening to the cooing from a cage hung up in a tree, and all his thoughts thoughts about doves, whilst the buffalo wanders unheeded into the sprouting field—the shepherd boy hides his dove in the kambodja thicket near the grave, to the end that the virtue of the holy place may impart to her voice the true high ring which takes the prize at the match. The merchant about to undertake a perilous voyage over sea lays his offering upon the grave. Women go thither to pray for a child. And many are the tales and experiences of good fortune fallen to them who invoked the memory of the bountiful king.

Therefore Mboq-Inten of Djalang Tiga nowise doubted that the dream spelled truth which showed her her daughter Inten, who had died in child-birth, seated at the grave in the Sacred Grove, smiling and crowned with flowers like a bride.

And all men and women of Soombertingghi said this about poor Sameerah—Sameerah who in her happy days was so much like Inten (the Jewel, as her name rightly declared her to be) that even old friends greeted one girl with the other's name—if Sameerah had been allowed to perform a pilgrimage to the tomb, as she so fervently de-

sired to do, then, of a surety, she would have become a mother, and the shame of sterility and the sorrow of her heart would never have addled her poor wits.

The young wife of the Resident of Sangean, Elizabeth of the fair face which would bend over in so sisterly a way toward dusky faces, loved to listen to the many tales about the miraculous tomb of the King who, for fraternity's sake, became a beggar. But when a woman whose child she had cured of a heavy sickness told her of poor Sameerah's longing and sorrow, and of Mboq-Inten's constant hope, she looked up with a new light in her eyes. And after that day her husband often found her alone and silent, deep in thought.

WHEN the wise woman who had driven life, together with the child, out of Inten's tortured body, laid the new-born babe upon Mboq-Inten's lap, she never looked at her grandchild. She never took her eyes off that closed face and that passive body, still at last from weeping and writhing. The women who folded the white grave-cloth around the dead one had to loosen the chilled hand out of the mother's clasp. She sat stunned when the babe's father called together kinsmen and neighbours for the choosing of the name, and did not even look up when a young friend of Inten, who had just become a mother herself, laid little Kaïran to her breast, and took him away to her home, to nurse him together with her own child.

But then the dream came. Crowned with flowers like a bride, and her long tresses that flowed over her shoulders and her knees so profusely interwoven with flowers that she seemed to be clothed in blossoms, Inten was seated at the grave, and she herself, holding little Kaïran by the hand, was hastening toward her, crying: "O my child, art thou then at last come back?"

Mboq-Inten woke up with that cry of joy. She ran to Kaïran's foster-mother. The kind-hearted young wife was suckling him; he drank eagerly. Jealously she looked on. Would she had been able to do it herself, would she could have fed Inten's child with her own life! With a passionate tenderness she stroked the soft little body. "Ah! how I will

take care of him! How I will feed him and foster him, that he may grow up tall and handsome, that thou mayest rejoice when thou seest him again, my jewel!"

She could hardly await the day for the fetching him home. She would sit with the child in her lap, feeding him with rice and banana kneaded together into sweetly nourishing mouthfuls. All day long she carried the little one about with her, lying in her carefully arranged slendang as in a hanging cradle. He slept by her side on the bale-bale, which she had spread with a new sleeping mat. The first thing she saw on awaking at dawn was the little round downy-black head; the eyes lay closed, the long lashes on the cheeks like two delicately striped streaks of shadow. The mouth was a little open, the tiny white teeth showing. Mboq-Inten raised herself on her elbow to gaze at him for a long while. She let her eyes have their fill of him. And still, when looking thus upon Inten's child, she would think of the days when she had looked in this same way upon Inten.

Paq-Inten had marked the grave with two ornamental wooden posts finely carved and sculptured, at head and foot, that Mboq-Inten might find it when, on the many Days of Remembrance that mothers hallow, she would bring to Inten's grave the sacrifice of food by which souls are sustained in the Land of Shadows. Mboq-Inten, however, observed such days only as are strictly prescribed by the Adat, the Law of Ancient Custom; and after a while she altogether ceased visiting the grave. But to the Sacred Grove she would go again and again; and as she laid the wreath of jessamine on the tomb and strewed handfuls of rose leaves over the moss, she would whisper, her eyes full of tears: "Do not stay away for too long a time, child of my heart! Come back soon, ah! soon! to thy dear mother!" Kaïran was far too little a child as yet to understand; but all the same she put flowers into his small hands sometimes and made him lay them on the tomb, and then she would say that this was to make his mother come back the sooner, and that when she came she would bring him whatever he wanted or could think of for a present. Paq-Kaïran did not busy himself much with his child. And he never spoke of Inten. He went in and out of his parents-in-law's house and the chamber where he had lived together with Inten, as if everything within were still as it had always been. Mboq-Inten thought that this was because he, like herself, was waiting for Inten's return,

though he would neither hear nor speak of it, and though his face would darken when she said to little Kaïran: "When Mother comes back—!"

But one morning he went out of the house as if he were going to the passar at Sangean, to look on and lay wagers at the cock-fight, and did not come back at night, nor next morning. It became time to plough the sawah—but he did not come home. And Paq-Inten, sighing and shaking his head, took to the pawn-house gear that he could not well dispense with, in order to get money to hire a helper in his son-in-law's stead. Some weeks after, a villager who had made the journey from Sumatra with the pilgrims' ship came and told Paq-Inten and Mboq-Inten how he had seen Paq-Kaïran in Medan. He was earning a good deal of money on a tobacco estate; and he had married a Battak woman out there.

Mboq-Inten cried shame upon him. The old man only sighed and said that it was too bad. What was to become of the field-work now, and the day's wages growing higher and higher and his limbs growing stiffer and stiffer? He kept on lamenting long after Mboq-Inten had put away all thought of the man who had abandoned her daughter; there were many men far better than he in Java! Inten would have a husband for the choosing, when she came back! But the loss which Paq-Inten was for ever bemoaning must be made good again; Inten should not return to a beggared home!

And the mother took up again the delicate work which, a few years agone, she had left to her daughter's younger eyes and suppler fingers, but which formerly she had done surpassingly well herself: the batikking of sarongs and head-kerchiefs and slendangs. The Chinaman in town—how sharply he used to look at the work through his large horn-rimmed spectacles!—always gave more for hers than for that of any of the other women. She feared, it is true, that she should no longer be able to do it so well. But with the thought of Inten in her heart she did her utmost.

Her batikking-frame stood under the eaves, there where the shadow stayed longest. She squatted down before the length of white cotton cloth hanging from the frame, and, intent upon the work, began drawing the figures of the design she had planned. The fine jet of molten wax running from the spout of the tiny batikking-bowl, no larger than

the cup of an acorn, fashioned leafy tendrils on the web, and flowers, and all manner of wonderful birds fluttering on butterfly-like wings. Blue, brown, bright yellow, and purple the dye-vats gleamed in the shadow of the lemon thicket. How many times from childhood onward had she not prepared those dyes, after the same prescription always; how often with the little jet of molten wax, blackened by reiterated use, and scraping off, and melting down again, traced that design exactly as she had seen it growing under her mother's batikking-bowl, and as she well knew that her mother's mother had traced it in her day! Over a thousand years old the pattern was, she had often heard it said. A princess had imagined it as she sat all alone amongst the flowers and birds and small animals of the Sacred Grove, where she chose to live rather than in the Kraton of her father the Sultan. The nymphs who have their abode in the wood were her companions. She never stood in need of food or of the things necessary to her work; for the wood-doves brought her plenty of sweet berries and nuts out of the tall trees; the grey monkeys knew when she was thirsty and came to her carrying in their hands "the little cool well-spring that hovers in the air," the ripe fruit of the cocoa-palm, that has sweetly flavoured water within its kernel; and the tiny bees, which neither sting nor buzz, made their nest in the tree overshadowing her, so that she need but stretch out her hand for the wax with which to trace her design, whilst on all the bushes the most beautiful flowers bloomed for her to gather and prepare dyes from. The little jester of the wood, the dwarf hart, that is wittier and merrier than all other animals, would caper and frolic before her and tell her all manner of stories, the drollest it could think of.

Whoever knew about this would easily recognize it all in the batik-design; although much of it had been lost at the hands of careless batikkers, whose thoughts were of other things, so that the true shape of what the Princess-in-the-Wood had imagined no longer appeared upon their cloth, but only a shadow as unsteady and distorted as the shadows upon the wall when the flickering oil wick is lit. Nor had Mboq-Inten herself ever seen a good design or made one herself, although her work, which she did lovingly, excelled that of the other women. But as now she set about her task, her heart full of that vision of Inten in the Sacred Grove, the slack lines regained vigour, shrivelled contours unfolded, clumsiness was changed into grace. The

loveliness of a heart at peace with itself and the loveliness of the forest blossomed forth under the flow from the tiny batikking-bowl. Wondering and rejoicing, she saw how the flowers she traced with yellow wax upon white cloth nevertheless resembled the splendidly coloured blossoms amongst the green leafage of the forest, and how the design on the wings of her butterflies verily was the jewel-like scintillation that so alluringly flashes out and again vanishes fluttering athwart the dappled shades and the sudden sunbeams there. The rippling gleams of the well-spring broke forth from wavy circlets and serpentine meanders. She remembered stories of nymphs and heroes and high adventures in the wood, when the dragon she had drawn with a long twisting body and gripping talons opened his perilous eyes and looked upon her. The bird that sailed so stately, his gorgeous wings outspread, was a messenger of the Gods.

There were five colours in Mboq-Inten's pattern; five times she had to dip the sarong into one of the five dyes corresponding to the part of the design in hand, all the others being covered with wax; and as each time a different part was stained, and again covered up with wax, whilst another was laid bare and, after another immersion, changed from white into its appointed glow of red or blue or rich brown—the ground being a lucid yellow, and a touch of black emphasizing an important feature here and there—Mboq-Inten each time saw a different element of the design appearing in a vigour and purity hitherto unknown. But as, after the fifth immersion and the removal of all the wax, it shone out in its full perfection and harmony, she stood motionless with joyous surprise. And the women of the village, one calling to another to come and see Mboq-Inten's sarong-batik, exclaimed that a Regent's consort, ay, a princess in the Kraton at Djocjakarta, might well be glad to wear so rich a garment!

The Chinaman in town wiped his spectacles on his grey silk badju, the better to inspect the batik as Mboq-Inten spread it out on his counter. And in his eagerness to possess it he hastily named a high price, so that he at once had to take back his word. But Mboq-Inten, who used to stand in so great fear of him, drew away the sarong from under his hands and left the shop with it, and he ran after her as far as the passar, with the money heavy and shining in his hand. Mboq-Inten went home well content. It made her proud to feel how heavily little

Kaïran, asleep in the hanging cradle of the slendang, weighed upon her hip. Soon he would be big enough to walk all the long way! She could give him what his little mouth would savour, what his little heart would have; enough of everything there would be for him. Oh, how Inten would smile, when she saw him so tall and so handsome! The offering she laid on the tomb in the Sacred Grove that day was even richer than the usual one. How long still would the time be, ah! how long? But she wiped away the tears that rose to her eyes, scalding. She would wait, she would wait patiently.

Even thus the husbandman waits who has sown his rice. He does not think of the emptiness in his barn; he thinks of the coming fulness on his field.

But after a very different manner did she wait who in the days of her happy girlhood had been Inten's very image, and as comely and as merry of heart as she; after a very different manner poor Sameerah waited for salvation out of the Sacred Grove; in vain longing, helpless, scorned.

At the same time as Inten's parents, the parents of Sameerah had prepared their daughter's marriage, in the good time of the year, the glad time, the time of plenty, the rice-harvest.

It is the marriage feast of the Rice. The two tallest and finest ears in the field, which have been tied together with a garland of flowers and set under a little dais of tressed leaves, are carried to the garner in a procession, surrounded by a guard of honour. And they who celebrate the feast, youths and maidens, promise each other their own marriage. Parents consult the learned concerning the omens, intermediaries come and go, presents are offered and accepted ceremoniously. Then the musicians make the merry marriage music to resound out of their bronze instruments, neighbours and friends bring gifts for the wedding banquet, the two who were alone in longing, far from one another, sit side by side in the place of honour crowned with flowers. And when once more the marriage of the Rice is celebrated, proud mothers appear amongst the shy girls in the harvest field. At last year's feast they carried a sheaf of rice-ears in their arm; at this, they carry a child.

Thus Inten and Sameerah had held their wedding feast on the same day in the same year. Not knowing about each other and what had happened to each other, they were as twin sisters in fate, even as they were twin sisters in form and face.

But when the next harvest of the rice came, Inten's companions mourned for her. And Sameerah's place remained empty in the file of young women walking to the rice field. She kept within the house, empty-armed, disgraced.

Another harvest feast came. She would not go to the field so poor as she would have stood there, the one woman childless amongst so many mothers. Her husband had not as yet reproached her, though his mother often spoke bitter words. But when, on the way to the passar or to the field, she saw him turn his head to look after a woman walking proudly with a baby in her carrying scarf, she felt her heart shrink till her breast ached; and in the night her sleeping-mat would be wet with tears. A good-natured neighbour had advised her to go in pilgrimage to the King Eremite's tomb. And ah! how she longed to go! When she went out at the village gate and took the main road, her eyes would seek the distance, where the hill-wood was dark against the sky. But her husband's mother, old Mboq-Noordin, kept the money of the family, and Sameerah did not dare ask for any, even of what she had earned herself, to pay for the journey with the fire-car to Sangean; she well knew she should meet with a contemptuous refusal.

Mboq-Noordin hated her with a hatred that grew ever bitterer; as she believed, because Sameerah bore her no grandchild, but of a truth because Sameerah was unhappy and ashamed. Even as the fowls in the garden hacked with sharp beaks at a sick hen till the wound with which it would have hidden itself lay open and bleeding—strong healthy creatures that crowded out of life a feeble and ailing thing—thus she with her contemptuous glance and scornful words hacked at Sameerah's barrenness. Those eyes, always cast down and so often red with crying, that timid attitude, goaded her into a venomous rage. She could not bear that poor weak sickly thing near her, she wanted it gone from the world, she must needs thrust at it with the sharpness of her eyes and her voice, with words that were like the sting of a scorpion. And because of the evil she did to Sameerah in her hatred, she hated her all the more. She gave Noordin no peace, she was for ever begging and

Sameerah

urging him to repudiate Sameerah—a woman whom Tooan Allah rejected, whom he had marked with the shame of barrenness!

In her wretchedness Sameerah at last plucked up courage for a deed. One day when Mboq-Noordin and Noordin had gone together to a distant passar, she stole to the kind-hearted neighbour and begged the loan of a little money for the journey to Sangean. And the good woman not only gave her the money, and that at a very low rate, but when Sameerah said, sadly, that Mboq-Noordin had taken away to the passar all the finest fruits in the garden, and had counted all the others one by one, so that she dared not take a single one, she also gave her some bananas for an offering upon the Saint's tomb, and even some precious balm upon a leaf, that the offering might be the more acceptable.

Sameerah put on festive raiment; she fastened a silver pin to her kabaya, an oleander-blossom in her hair. On the village road she smiled at the children. Soon, soon, she too would have a little one like that in her arms! Confidently she took her place in the long file of women walking down the main road to the station. But a suspicious fancy had caused Mboq-Noordin to turn back on her way to the passar. Suddenly she stood before her daughter-in-law. The very last women in the file heard the names she called her, in so loud a voice did she shriek out her fury. They shook their heads at it; Mboq-Noordin insulted her son's wife in all too vile a manner, truly. And there were Hollanders upon the highway who heard—did she never notice? It was the carriage of the Tooan Resident that drove past just now.

Stricken dumb with terror and shame, Sameerah suffered herself to be driven back home. The old woman threatened: if Noordin heard what she had secretly dared to do, he would grind her knees against one another so that it would take a month to heal the wounds; he would tie her to a post of the house, when he went on a day's journey again! Sameerah answered not a word; not even with a look did she defend herself. Truly there was no need for the mother-in-law to take away her good clothes, leaving her nothing but outworn dingy things in which no decent woman would show herself out of doors; there was no need for her so to burden Sameerah with toil that from dawn to dusk she found no time even to go to the river where the women bathed. Sameerah felt too deeply ashamed at that public humiliation to venture

out amongst people. She hid away even from the kind neighbour when she went to pound the rice in the back garden: she had heard the word Mboq-Noordin threw at her, over the hedge! Within the house she glided along the walls like a shadow. Her husband and his mother hardly knew whether she was or was not there. Noordin but rarely spoke to her; his mother never but to give her harsh words, to which she had no answer. By and by she lost the habit of speech.

There was but one happy moment in her day: at dawn, when she went to feed the turtle-dove that sat high in its little bamboo cage in the cotton-tree by the well. Within the silent house Noordin and Mboq-Noordin still lay asleep. On the darkling jessamine shrubs that chilled her ankles with dew as she brushed past, the white star-like blossoms unfolded, sending forth an arrowy fragrance. As she loosened and paid out the rope and the cage came down, dark, and swinging a little, the sky into which she looked up grew ever whiter. The dove sat cowering, benumbed with cold and darkness; she held the little creature to her throat, bending down her cheek upon it, fondled it, talked baby-talk to it. She let it peck grains of rice from her finger-tips and from her lips. When, with a last caressing touch on its silky feathers, she had put it back into the cage, she would linger to see how it rejoiced in the new sunshine, how it threw out its downy breast, preened its wings, and, its black eyes all aglisten, turned its delicate little head hither and thither, gracefully.

She heard Mboq-Noordin's shrewish voice; hastily she hoisted the cage to its place in the tree and hurried into the house to prepare the morning meal. The villagers, catching a glimpse of her as she stole along the hedge, in dingy clothes, her hair rough and carelessly twisted, dull-eyed and dumb always, never answering even a word of friendly greeting, said amongst each other, pitying her, that her great sorrow had darkened her mind. And perhaps she had indeed, as the unhappy days went on, grown to be different from other people. She seemed no longer to feel Mboq-Noordin's taunts and cruelties, nor Noordin's contempt, which sometimes turned to rough usage. Her face grew still and rigid as the countenance of the stone images in the great temple, the Boro Buddhur.

At sight of children, only, it quickened. Naked little ones, toddling on plump legs, played at the garden gate. One dangled a cockchafer

tied to a thread; another held a cricket clutched in his chubby little fist, and laughed to see it angrily grasping with its hooked feet at the blade of grass with which he tickled it; a third had a bow made of a shred of palm leaf and fibre twisted into a string, which made a shrill whirring sound as he swung it through the air with a twirl, as he had seen his big brother do.

Sameerah softly crept nearer. What chagrin it was to her that she had nothing to tempt a baby with, no flower, no fruit, no piece of sweetmeat! Her arms ached with longing for such a smooth soft little body. With a beseeching smile and hands outstretched she squatted down before the child. It stood still and looked at her dubiously. An anxious voice called it; it toddled away, never looking back. Sameerah stole away, her eyes full of tears. Afterward she was even duller and more listless than usually.

But that passive and silent obedience gradually began to chafe Noordin even worse than his mother's ceaseless urging of a divorce. And one evening—it was the third rice-harvest after the wedding—when handsome Sedoot, the Hadji money-lender's daughter, had smiled at him, standing between the sheaves on her father's field, he came home with an evil look in his eyes.

Sameerah had been doing rough work, late as it was in the day. There was dust on her unkempt hair; her sarong, which she had gathered up and fastened under her naked arms, hung slovenly about her. With eyes cast down she set the evening meal before her husband. He thrust her away.

"Thy face irks me! Get thee gone! Leave my house!"

Frightened, she looked into his scowling face.

But Mboq-Noordin pounced upon her, seizing her by the arm. "Why tarriest, thou? Dost thou not hear what my son says?" She feared that perhaps he might forget his anger if the divorce had to wait for the Modin and his decision. As Sameerah stood there in her beggarly clothes, tired out with labour, empty-handed, she thrust her out of the house.

She stood all alone on the empty village road. It was almost night.

She never hesitated, never turned her head. Thoughtlessly sure as one who walks in his sleep, she went out at the village gate and took the road to the Sacred Grove.

It is a way of many miles from Soombertingghi to Sangean. She walked all night. She went on without resting; she felt no fatigue. It was dark at first and lonely; she never knew. Then it grew light, and the highway was full of people; she never knew. She knew of one thing only: of her longing for the miraculous tomb where she would find happiness. The desire was as an inmost spot of smarting life within her, all around it numb, dead.

It was passar day at Sangean. From all the villages of the neighbourhood, market folk were on their way. Along the footpath on either side of the wide road, where bullock-carts were slowly jolting on and horsemen cantered past, long files of women walked, bearing on their heads flat baskets heaped with fruit and confectionery, or carrying on their hips bundles of sarongs and scarves. Each had a baby in her carrying-scarf; children trotted after them; their ceaseless chatter about goods and prices made a sound like a brooklet clucking. The men walked with arms swinging idly, at leisure. Many carried a pigeon in a small cage overspread with a silk kerchief; a match of singing doves was to be held at the passar. Every man praised his bird's voice, but they whispered about the goldsmith of Sangean, who made a practice of passing over his dove's bill and tongue a golden ring on which magic characters were graven, in order to give her a fine voice; was not it sure to be the winner?

As they overtook Sameerah, who walked ever more slowly, men and women and even children turned the head to look at her, wondering at this woman who was going the way to the passar empty-handed and so dirty and poorly dressed, and whose dull eyes had a look as if they did not see. They pointed her out to one another: "Eh! a crazy woman!"

The Resident and his lady drove past on their daily morning tour, in the gleaming carriage with the tall Australian horses. At the approaching hoof-beat native horsemen dismounted, drivers of bullock-carts guided their team to the side of the road, and the horde of pedestrians squatted down in the dust. And the Resident too looked with amazement at the native woman, continuing her way, all alone, through the humbly motionless crowd; and he too judged that she must be of diseased mind. Even Elizabeth almost thought so, as, stirred by a faint remembrance, she looked back at the pitiable figure, wandering alone with failing gait.

Sameerah never saw, nor heard, nor felt. As the river flows past a stone that in flood-time has been washed down from the green bank and left on a sandy shallow, where not one of the countless wavelets quickens it into new freshness and sprouting greenery, while dry and dead it lies in the scorching heat of the sun—so that full river of human beings, with all their desires and energies and joys, flowed past her without stirring her to a single emotion. The market folk overtook her, passed, disappeared into the distant flicker of sunlight between the shadows of the tamarinds on either side the highway. The last had vanished as she attained the steep that ascends to the tomb in the grove.

Out of the deep shadow it shone on her, all alight with flowers. She stretched forth her arms, and sank against it.

It was very still in the wood. The multitudinous jubilation of song that had burst out in the enrapturing red of dawn had fallen silent before the ever higher, ever hotter ascent of the sun over the tree-tops. No least breath of wind stirred the leafage. The murmuring of the spring was all but inaudible. A cool smell rose out of it, the smell of water over stones, which lured the butterflies. Big black-and-yellow ones, like a play of sunshine amidst shadows, and crowds of very tiny ones, coloured a dull and tender blue, came fluttering and drank. Others alighted upon the harvest of flowers heaped up on the tomb, their little airy shadows gliding over Sameerah's head, sunk back among the flowers, over her closed eyelids. For a long while she lay thus, motionless.

But then a sound broke upon the great silence which awakened her dull senses: very softly, a turtle cooed in the kambodja-tree over her head. It was the singing dove belonging to Marjoos of Sangean, the little son of the dalang, the poet-musician, who, of an evening, would recite so many and beautiful poems about the Sacred Grove and its nymphs and good genii. The small boy kept his bird in the kambodja-tree, hidden away from every one. He secretly took to it carefully selected food, and water out of the sacred well, every morning when he drove the buffalo herd of the village to the pasture on the yonder side of the wood. Thorny twigs and bunches of prickly leaves, twisted around the branch on which the cage was hung, kept off small beasts of prey that climb the trees; the kambodja leafage screened it from

peering eyes. Marjoos himself could not discover it when, on going, he lingered yet a little while among the bushes to listen to the contented cooing and crooning of his little songster.

It was the hour when he was wont to come; the turtle was calling for him.

It seemed to Sameerah that she heard her own dove. Her poor heart, which had kept itself close shut for so long, because nothing ever came near but to hurt it, unfolded. And as, with a dawning smile, she listened to that gentle cooing, all the manifold pleasantness of the wood softly stole upon her quickening perception. She breathed the subtle scent of water and cool moist earth, of leafage in damp shadow, of flowers just blooming, out of which the first whiff of odour ascended together with the vanishing dews of night; she gazed at the butterflies that sat drinking on the wet stones on the brink of the bubbling spring, wings tremulously erect, and suddenly fluttered away, through sunbeams and airy shadows; she gazed at the flowers here and there, small specks of clear colour shining through the green dimness of the wood. She heard a woodpecker hammering and sought and found the green bird amongst the green leaves; his head, hastily hammering, flickered like a green jewel. Two squirrels, chasing each other along the branches of a kenaree-tree—they had paused in their game of flight and pursuit at her coming, but begun again when they saw her so very quiet—leapt and darted athwart the lightly stirred leafage, out of which the ripe nuts fell down with a soft rustle. The grey monkeys, to which the country folk bring sacrifices, came; as usually, the women going to the passar had laid down fruits for them on the open space before the tomb. They suffered the mothers to go first, who carried their little ones hanging to their breasts, the tiny hands grasping their fur, the small heads, with the pale, naked ears, pressed to their dugs. The troop waited patiently whilst those who gave food fed themselves. Not as a thought, as a sensation only, indistinct, but deep and strong, there welled up in Sameerah an assurance of happiness, of which there was enough in the world for her too. It seemed as if it would come soon. Here in the Sacred Grove, at the tomb of the good prince who, of his loving-kindness, had conferred happiness upon so many unhappy ones —here it would come to her. She must adorn herself for it as girls in

harvest-time adorn themselves for coming happiness, as a bride adorns herself for her bridegroom. She must be cleanly and crowned with flowers.

She rose and, descending into the sacred well, bathed. Then, going hither and thither wherever a flower shone, she gathered all she could find. And returning to the tomb with her arms full of buds and blossoms, she sat down in the kambodja shade and began to weave a garland. It grew into circlets that fitted her arms a little way under the shoulder, at the place where a bride wears the solemn ornament. And then she made smaller wreaths for her wrists; then a necklace so long that it went around her neck thrice, as a bride's necklace does, all but covering her shoulders and hanging down over her bosom, strand under flowery strand. Finding a long trailing spray on which clusters of purple chalices shone, she bent it around her brow like a diadem. And still her lap was full of flowers, and out of the kambodja branches more flowers fell down upon her and all around her—great white blossoms that lay lustrous among the shadows of the sparse-set rosettes of pointed leaves overhead. She picked up one and, inhaling its subtly sweet scent, set it in the deep fold of the sarong between her breasts. Her hair had slid out of its coil. As she felt it gliding over her shoulder, she spread it all around her and with deft finger-tips hung among the long black tresses small flowers and leaflets and softly clinging rose petals and jessamine buds that had fluttered out of the sacrificial wreaths on the tomb, until as she gazed down upon it the flower-spangled darkness looked to her like a rich black silk scarf cunningly wrought with pelangi-work in purple, white, blue, and green, such as in the happy days of long ago she herself had made and proudly worn. Meet ornament it seemed to her for the feast of her life.

Suddenly the dove in the kambodja-tree uttered a loud, joyful note, then was silent. Marjoos had come.

With eager hands the small boy loosed the knot by which the cage hung. The hour had come to match his pet against the singing doves of all the countryside. He had seen the goldsmith going to the passar, with his dove in a cage under a red silk kerchief, and that golden ring of his with the magic characters on his finger. Ah! would not the virtue of the Sacred Grove prove more potent? As, carefully shielding the cage, he made his way through the undergrowth around the kambodja,

Marjoos rapidly recited once more the invocation with which suppliants implore aid from the Sultan-Hermit and from the most gracious of all gentle genii, the Princess-in-the-Forest.

He emerged in the open space by the tomb, and stood still, startled. There, in a robe of flowers, and with a crown of purple flowers on her head, sat the Princess-in-the-Forest! Rapt in her dream, Sameerah had not heard the slight rustle among the bushes. But before her cast-down eyes a shadow appeared upon the sunlit ground—the motionless shadow of a child with a bird-cage in his hand, and, behind the delicate little shadows of the trellis, the shadow of a dove turning hither and thither its head and ruffling its feathers. She looked up.

At that deep still gaze Marjoos felt his heart give a great throb and stand still. With a sobbing gasp for breath he fled.

The highway was empty. Never daring to look back, he ran until he reached the passar. There, plucking up courage again at the sight of so many people, and of his father seated within the ring of onlookers and bettors at the match of the singing doves, he made his way through the crowd, and, trembling and panting, stammered out the story of his wonderful adventure.

In an instant it had spread all over the passar. Men and women left their talk, their meal, and their chaffering to hear it with their own ears from the lips of Marjoos, who had to repeat it again and again as he stood there within the ring of pigeon fanciers, forgetful of their birds and their bets. The crowd hesitated between eager belief and contemptuous disbelief, some saying with a shrug that this was the mere day-dream of a good-for-nothing boy who had idled away his morning in the wood instead of minding the buffaloes; and others contending that nevertheless such things had been, and why should not Marjoos be favoured with a sight of the heavenly one, good little lad as he was, and a son moreover to the Dalang, the learned one, well versed in secret lore, who had by heart, and sang passing well, so many and beautiful poems in praise of the divine batikker for whose sake flowers bloom in the Sacred Grove—even the Princess-in-the-Forest?

Suddenly some one cried that he was going to make sure; and at once a score of people were with him on the way to the wood. Then all the passar followed—folk of Sangean, folk of Djalang Tiga, folk of Soombertingghi, men, women, and the smallest of small children that

Sameerah in the Sacred Grove

could walk alone, all hastened toward the Sacred Grove. The Modin was amongst the crowd, the regulator-of-hours at the Mosque, who used to shake his head in so grave a disapproval at tales of genii and nymphs haunting the wood. And, followed by his servant, who carried the box of condiments for sirih-chewing, the Assistant Wedana led the way, a scion of a most noble family. From the Kawedanan, whither a clerk, sent out to enquire about the cause of the turmoil on the passar, had brought the tidings, the Wedana himself came hurrying on horseback. He whipped up his pony, much disquieted by these extraordinary events and desirous of obtaining immediate certainty that no harm could come thereof, nor anything for which who could tell but he might be held responsible, as having authority over the native population of the district? Gathering volume as it went, like some rivulet swelling to a river as from either side brooks come pouring into it, the crowd, swelled by groups hastening toward it out of fields and houses, had become a multitude before its leaders reached the Sacred Grove.

Mboq-Inten, who, holding little Kaïran by the hand, and followed by Paq-Inten, was coming down the road from Djalang Tiga, bearing a flower-offering for the Sultan-Hermit's tomb, stood aside, amazed, from the approach of the Tooan Wedana, the Assistant Wedana, and the Modin. As soon as, for good manners, she dared, she asked a passer-by for what cause all these many people, leaving the passar, too, were going to the Sacred Grove.

"Eh! hast thou not heard, Mother-of-Inten, that the Princess-in-the-Forest is there? Marjoos the Dalang's son saw her, sitting by the Sultan's tomb, all clothed in flowers and crowned with flowers like a bride."

Mboq-Inten uttered a cry that made the hastening throng to stand still and look up with startled faces. "Not the Princess-in-the-Forest, not the Princess-in-the-Forest, but Inten, Inten, my dear daughter, come back to me at last!" Sobbing and laughing, the tears running down her face as again and again she called out Inten's name in a desperate jubilation, the old woman, catching her grandchild up to her

breast, ran up the hill with the light-footed speed of a girl. Sameerah, awakened from her dreamy trance by that sudden multitude that filled the forest with a rumour as of surging waters, sat gazing wide-eyed, slowly paling under her purple crown. Hundreds of faces were bent upon her. She put both hands over her eyes and shrank back into herself, bowing down so deeply as all but to disappear under her hair, which fell forward in a soft cloud of flower-starred darkness.

But even as it vanished Mboq-Inten had recognized the face which, throughout the days and the nights of three long years, had smiled upon her steadfast hope. And, falling on her knees by the side of that cowering shape, she seized Sameerah in both arms and through flowers and locks kissed her forehead and eyes and cheeks with passionately tender kisses, saying over and over again the same words of endearment: "O Inten, O my child, O my heart's jewel, at last, at last, at last thou art come! Alas, wherefore didst thou not return at once to thy mother? I have been longing for thee these three long years!" And, raising in both hands the face, from which she gently put the hair back, she gazed into the shy eyes, and began again to weep for happiness. "In no wise art thou changed, my little golden daughter! Ah! I cannot satiate my old eyes with the sight of thee! How have I longed, all these many years, to feel thee again, thus, close against me! Of a truth, child of my heart, I would not have remained alive, after thou hadst died; nay, I myself too would have died of sorrow, but for the dream of thy return which Tooan Allah sent me. Thus, thus I saw thee in my dream, crowned like a bride, here, on this very spot—waiting for me and for thy child. Behold him, my Inten! look upon him! Thou didst not see him when thou broughtest him forth, thou my poor one! thy eyes were dark with death, already. Rejoice in him now! Is he not tall and handsome?"

She had set Kaïran in Sameerah's lap; shy and half afraid, he looked at the strange woman. Smiling out of tear-dimmed eyes, Mboq-Inten gazed upon the two.

"Well? What does Kaïran say to his sweet mother?"

Sameerah's arms closed round the child, round the soft little body that felt warm against her breast. She did not think, she did not attempt to understand or to guess, she did not even wonder—this small creature that she was pressing against her was her child. Her lips that

had forgotten speech began to murmur softly. "So sweet!" she whispered, "so sweet!"

Kaïran took courage. He thought of the many things that had been promised him for Mother's return. Between vanishing shyness and beginning confidence he peeped up at her from under his eyelashes. "What has Mother brought Kaïran?"

A deep laughter welled up into Sameerah's throat, a light broke from her eyes. "Say that again, ah! do say that again, my little heart—say 'Mother' to me!"

Somewhat confused and doubtingly the child obeyed. "Mother!" Then hastily: "Has Mother brought Kaïran a dove?" For, even now upon the highway, Mboq-Inten, who could not get him away from the caged turtle of a passer-by, had promised that Mother would bring him one when she came home.

She said, laughing proudly: "He is so clever, the little one! He remembers everything! So thou wert too, my child, wise from childhood onward. He is like thee in all things."

Sameerah looked at the woman who had put the child in her lap so kindly; gratefully she smiled at her.

Mboq-Inten took her hand and stroked her own face with it. "Do thou also say 'Mother, dear Mother,' now. Dost know thou hast not yet greeted me with a single little word, my child?"

Will-less and happy, Sameerah repeated: "Mother! dear Mother!"

Mboq-Inten turned toward the multitude. "Be witness, all of ye, that Inten has recognized me, and that she has recognized her child! Come, Paq-Inten! come hither! Here is our daughter."

The people stood silent. They were at a loss what to think. Was this not, indeed, Inten, having Inten's face, Inten's shape? There were many folk from Djalang Tiga who had known Inten from a child, and women who had seen her die, and men who had carried her to the grave. But none the less, there they beheld her, even as it had been prophesied that they would behold her, crowned with flowers like a bride, sitting by the tomb in the Sacred Grove; they beheld her living and smiling, holding in her arms Kaïran as her child, and herself held in Mboq-Inten's arms, as in her mother's arms a daughter. No nymph of the woods this, as Marjoos had believed and still maintained, all but crying

with disappointment; no heavenly apparition, but in very deed and truth Inten, risen from the grave!

There were, indeed, people from Soombertingghi too, who had heard Mboq-Noordin's frightened exclamation, "It is Sameerah!" as, together with Noordin and Sedoot, they hastily fled out of the wood. But in that smiling happy one, a mother and a daughter, caressing and caressed, none recognized poor lonely Sameerah whose eyes were always red with weeping, and who shrank so shyly from Mboq-Noordin's reviling; in that radiant apparition, flower-crowned and clad in flowers, was to be traced no likeness to the wretched sloven toiling in Noordin's house. And they too thought this must be the fair one who in the happy days of her girlhood was Sameerah's counterpart—even that same Inten who used to be hailed by Sameerah's name, being so like her. Many miracles had happened at the Sultan-Hermit's tomb: why, then, not this one of Inten returning from the grave?

So that as Paq-Inten, irresolute and something afraid, came forward, the crowd urging him on encouragingly, every one expected him to declare: "This is, truly, my daughter Inten." He saw it. And, in his heart, he had thought of how he should fare if, in presence of so many people and of the headman of the village and of the Wedana himself, he dared to gainsay Mboq-Inten—Mboq-Inten who brought such a great deal of money into the house, and managed the household so exceedingly well, and had her way in all things and with every one! And at the same time he reflected that, with so fair a daughter in the house, he should not have to wait much longer for a son-in-law who would help him in the field. And as, with these many thoughts in his mind, he looked at the young woman whom Mboq-Inten was holding in her embrace, he said in all sincerity: "Truly, this is Inten!—Come, our daughter, come home with us, and we will prepare a feast and offer up a sacrifice to the spirits, in order that all our friends and thy playmates of past days may rejoice with us over thy return from the Land of Shadows."

He raised her. Then all saw how fair she was as, with Kaïran in her arms and smiling for happiness, she stood in the mantle of her long hair all pranked and pied with flowers and about her brow the purple radiance of her wreath, that shone transparent in the sunlight. No wonder, said more than one, that Marjoos should have believed her to

be a nymph, a Widadari! She was fair as the bride of the God of Love! Joyfully the villagers of Djalang Tiga formed into a procession to conduct her home.

But, suddenly, all changed.

The Wedana, able no longer to bear the sense of his responsibility and his anxiety as to the possible results of the affair to himself—how carefully he had to watch over the chances of a promotion, hoped for, ah! for how long a time, which of a certainty would be ruined if there occurred any disturbance whatsoever in his district!—the Wedana had ridden to the Resident in hot haste, mercilessly whipping up his pony and muttering incantations all the while to make it carry him more swiftly than the wind. And the day was a lucky one! He was hardly out of the shadows of the Sacred Grove when he saw the gleaming carriage, with the police mandoor on the box, the yellow of his uniform all ashine, and the pair of tall horses, powerfully trotting, come down the road in a whirling cloud of dust. Hastily dismounting, he stood bareheaded by the roadside, where the Kandjeng Resident's gaze might fall on him. Ah! what to say now, so that even the faintest semblance of a fault might be far from him?

The tall horses stopped; he heard the imperious voice. Eyes cast down, he stammered. And the day was lucky indeed! The Kandjeng Resident laughed. The Wedana risked a stealthy glance and felt the thumping of his heart abate. The Njonja Besar was with the Kandjeng. She greeted him with a kindly look.

Being a prudent man, the Wedana had never let any Hollander perceive that he knew Dutch; and he modestly kept his eyes on the ground, and waited as one who lets alien sounds go past him, and does not desire to know more than his betters judge meet that he should know, whilst, entirely reassured, he heard the Resident say to his lady that, really, only in a district like Sangean, all overshadowed with legends and superstition, was a thing like this possible: that a street-dancer adorning herself for a feast in a secluded spot should by a little buffalo-herd be worshipped for a nymph, and embraced for her daughter, risen from the grave, by an old mother who for many years had

mourned that daughter's death. To the cursory question about this foolish old woman's name the Wedana said, boldly, Mboq-Inten from Djalang Tiga, a village just outside the boundary of his district. And as to the woman in the wood, some believed her to be Sameerah from Soombertingghi, Noordin's wife, who for this long time past had been said to be darkened in mind, being childless and greatly despised on account of this.

Elizabeth uttered an exclamation at the two names. Oh, truly a miracle at the tomb of the royal Saint, this happy illusion that so graciously saved two lives lost to wretchedness already, and of two sadly solitary ones made a mother and a daughter! But the Resident, who at first had indulgently shrugged his shoulders, frowned at a sudden reflection. Was this child's talk about a woman risen from the grave as harmless as it appeared? He thought of disturbances that had originated in a similar tale of wonder—refusal to pay taxes and to obey orders at the behest of one risen from the dead, attempts at the overthrow of lawful authority in favour of some descendant of a Sultan's family, extinct long since. He would crush the dangerous folly in the germ.

As if she felt a menace to her new-won happiness at the approach of that tall, white-clad man with the severe face advancing through the crowd of natives, who as they made room for him, timorously squatted down, Mboq-Inten retreated toward the tomb; and, sitting down at the foot, she took into her lap her whom she would have for her daughter, thus proclaiming and maintaining her right to her in presence of all the village folk and of the Wedana and of the Kandjeng Resident himself.

Elizabeth touched her husband's arm. It was she, it was the poor brain-sick wanderer on the highway of that morning, crazed perhaps by who could tell what unbearable sorrow from which she was seeking deliverance at the tomb of the merciful Saint; it was the weeping one whom she had seen ill-treated by the cruel old woman—the despised childless wife, smiling now with a child in her arms! And her hand upon her husband's arm, her eyes upon his, implored: "Suffer these roses of imagination to become daily bread, to live by!"

But with an impatient gesture he warded off the unspoken prayer. No indulgence toward such superstitions, no weak shirking of the

ruler's duty to maintain the established order in spiritual things as well as in material.

He addressed Mboq-Inten severely. "How dost thou dare, ancient one! to say this woman is thy daughter, whereas all men and women in thy village know that she died in child-birth, three years ago now, and the men are here who buried her? Enough of this folly! Let this stranger go, and do thou return to thy own house!"

Mboq-Inten looked up. She did not speak. But an unconquerable will stood in her eyes. Sameerah, frightened, hid herself against that one being who was kind to her; and she held Kaïran tight-locked in her arms.

Her gesture and deathly pale face touched the official. And certainly it was no rebellious desire for freedom such as he would have quelled, but only a childish love of the miraculous, which he noted in the many faces timorously gazing at him. But he was a guardian and educator of those eternally infantile ones: it was his duty to cure them of that childish craving for the impossible which loves to soothe and delude itself with a specious semblance, that conscious shirking of the truth for the sake of desire. And he said, though somewhat less severely: "If I cause thy daughter's grave to be opened, and show thee her bones within the grave, wilt thou then confess that she is dead and turned to dust? and that it is a stranger whom thou art holding embraced now?"

Fearlessly Mboq-Inten made answer: "Let the grave be opened in which Inten has lain! And let me stand by the open grave! I shall behold no bones in it; for she who died and was buried is arisen, and I hold her in my arms."

The dull red of annoyance flushed the Hollander's face. He gave an abrupt order. The men went silently.

But Elizabeth caught at his hand. "Oh, why do a thing like this? Shall, then, a poor handful of death avail against life and the truth of life? Look, look at the love in Mboq-Inten's eyes! Her love it is that is arisen from the grave, her love it is that lives! That, surely, is the great miracle, that love always arises again in the heart that once has loved. It does not decay in any grave; no long years, no bitter sorrow, have power over it, to weaken or to discourage it. And for ever and ever again Love is the mother, and for ever and ever again Love is the child.

And by love only we live and have our being, all of us, all of us, as many as we are human beings upon this world in need of love."

She uttered the helpless disconnected words in a voice deeper than her own; she groped her way toward her thought; as one blinded with an excess of light she reached for a truth in comparison with which that other truth which men meant when they spoke of reality and justice and law was a little and empty thing, an ephemeral semblance. She stood pale and tremulous as a flame, herself a ray of that great light, its glories shining through her.

The native folk who did not understand her words yet understood herself, her pallor, the dark and fervid tenderness in her eyes, and her passionate voice. As toward their salvation, Mboq-Inten and Sameerah raised their eyes toward her. Elizabeth went up to them and gently took a hand of each into her hands. Thus she looked at her husband beseechingly. He stood in doubt still, dark. But then he looked into her eyes. The men who were to open the grave had stood still. He made the gesture for which he saw they were waiting. Well content, they receded into the crowd.

The three women smiled at one another.

Elizabeth and Mboq-Inten saw the calm light of reason dawning in the face of her who had been called Sameerah, but who, from this hour on, was Mother-of-Kaïran.

So fair a miracle, all the folk thought, was never yet wrought in the Sacred Grove.

A NATIVE OF JAVA

AS manifold as the loveliness with which it caresses his senses and his soul, so manifold is the love with which the native of Java, the brown man of the earth, living poorly and humbly close to the glebe, loves his land, most lovely Java.

He loves the soil of Java, which is a fire in the east monsoon season, and a flood in the months of the rains; which, under the tread and turning wheels of the long files of bullock-carts, slowly creaking along the harvested sugar-cane fields, floats up in clouds of whitish dust, and lies dark and cool on the hands of the women at work in the rice-field, transplanting the month-old seedlings from the seed-plot to the sawah, as they carefully press the soaked earth around the limp, pale green stalk that the plant may strike firm root and thrive; the earth that softly yields to the potter's fashioning fingers as he shapes the lump on his revolving disk into capacious rice-bowl or slender cooling-jar; the earth that stands steadfast and strong in the dikes of the flooded terraced fields, bearing up against the hillside a flight of lakelets, crystalline pools, where the purple skies of sunrise and sunset and all the sailing clouds of azure noon float reflected amidst the green of the sprouting rice.

He loves the scents of Java, the thousand scents that float on the passing breeze; the smell of wet earth and boulders in the shallow river, of young leafage springing from shoots all swollen and gleaming with sap, of the pasture where the naked herdsman lies piping in the shade as his broad buffaloes plunge into the pool, snorting; the bitter smell of the tall alang-alang grass afire on the hillside, where some reckless nomad sits waiting to sow his rice in the ashes, that he may gather a harvest from soil unbroken and untilled; the exquisite fragrance of the penang palm in bloom, breathing from the wall of trees that hides from view a hamlet; the pungent smell of the market-place and the crowded highway, and the home where children are always being fed; the odour of the incense that hallows the eve before the Day of Prayer; the scent of the white jessamine wreaths that crown the bride and the bridegroom sitting in state at the wedding feast.

He loves the sounds of Java, the innumerable sounds, to which his heart makes gladsome answer; the delectable sound of the rain on the living leaves of the wood and the withered leaves of woven roofs, on the boulders in the ravine, where the silent brooklet begins to purl and cluck, and suddenly lifts up clear voices calling aloud; the wind-stirred rustle and murmur of the bamboo grove that surrounds the village, a swaying cloud-like wall of foliage, where at sunset swarms of rice-birds twitter unseen; the busy sound of rice-pounding, a dancing rhythmical beat from the hollowed-out tree-trunk lying between the starrily flowering citron bushes of the fruit garden, the scented space of shade and freshness for the labouring housewife, over whose shoulders the babe, cradled in the deftly slung slendang cloth, laughs at the dance of the golden rice grains bouncing away from the pestle; the festive sound of the gamelan orchestra played by an able musician whose touch on the bronze sends the deep tones and the shrill soaring through the silences of the night, and they hover for a while firefly-like, gladdening hearts far away.

He loves the colours of Java, the clear and effulgent ones, the darkly glowing ones saturated with mellow sunshine, the delicate ones, tender and cool as moonlight upon dew; the tints of diaphanous hilltops in the distance and of the mist-flushed plain; the sparkling green of the sawah; the purple in the heavily hanging blossom cone of the banana-tree at the back of his house; the thousand-tinted sparkle with which the long files of gaily attired women strew tamarind-shaded roads that lead to the market; the scarlet and blue and green and black and gold of the garb in which gods, nymphs, and heroes are represented in the solemn wayang drama.

And he loves the daily labour of Java, the labour he does not do for wages in the service of the alien, but for his own ends, at his own will, in his own way, the ancient way of his people, as his father taught it to him.

To go to the sawah at daybreak—the field that out of the broad expanse of common land the headman and elders of his village have allotted him as his own for a year's space—to go, his feet in the dew-frosted grass where scents still are asleep, his face lifted to the colourless sheen that precedes dawn, to move lightly through air fresh and abundant as welling water, feeling on his shoulder the light burden of the wooden

plough, and looking at the yoke of broad-backed buffaloes that slowly tread the wonted way—the ploughman's good friends they, who lend their strength to his knowledge; to drive the long furrow through soil growing warmer as morning glows into noon, the rich soil where the rice grains of the recently gathered harvest already are sprouting under the ashes of the stubble fires (the ploughman thinks of the frolicking boys of the village, how they leapt among the leaping flames, and remembers himself leaping and frolicking thus not so many harvests ago); to return in the heat of noon to find the coolness of the house, and the meal of rice and dried fish neatly served on a strip of freshly gathered banana leaf; to see, in the slowly cooling hours of the afternoon, the lengthening shadows gliding along a narrowing strip of unbroken ground, slender man's shadow side by side with broad shadows of plough beasts; and to draw the plough out of the last furrow as he sees the buffaloes and his own arms and knees reddened by the glow of sunset. Thus to live through the working day is sweet to him.

And sweet is the restful evening afterward, when, perchance, he does not go home after bathing under the small gurgling and frothing cascade of the hillside, where the women of the village fill their pitchers, but he squats down in the group of young men, who sit smoking their cheroots and quizzing the girls in impromptu rhymes, laughing when some quick-witted maiden returns an apt answer. Arms under head he lies at length and feels the evening breeze lifting up the wet hair at his temples, and gazes at the Ploughman whom Westerners call Orion, as he rises in the darkening heavens and drives his starry plough along the arching furrow that stretches from eastern horizon to western. The crickets in the leaves, the tiny ones that shrilly trill, and the large ones that buzz and thrum, hum him asleep. When the sky begins to gleam around the fading morning star, the sheen that lights up to purple the darkness of his eyelids wakes him. Benumbed with sleep, he half rises, keeping his sarong drawn over his head, and sits still, arms around knees, head drooping, like some bush bending under its burden of dew. Even as the bush opens its blossoms, so he slowly opens out toward the rising sun.

He loves the feasts of Java, at which gods and genii are his unseen guests. For many weeks beforehand he rejoices in the coming harvest feast. A merry sight it is to him when the housewife prepares and dyes

with yellow boreh powder the sacrificial rice and chooses the finest fruit of the garden for an offering to Dewi Sri, the Rice-Goddess. When the angkloong players begin the feast, shaking their sets of graduated bamboo tubes from which the liquid notes pour forth clucking, he binds a handful of rice-ears into his kerchief, and another handful into the kerchief his friend holds out toward him, and, with the gaudy bundles dangling from either end of his bamboo yoke, he performs the graceful dance that follows the rise and fall of that undulating music.

He loves the graves of Java, the miracle-working tombs of the saints of Islam and of mighty sultans, whither he goes to pray for a blessing on his undertakings; the graves of his father and mother, whither on set days the household brings flowers and food, that the souls of the dead may feed, and rejoice, beholding their children's love still faithful to them and mindful of their needs in the cold Land of Shadows.

All things of Java he loves; all of his lovely country is sweet to his senses and sweet to his soul—so abundant in sweetness that even the utterly poor may often have his fill of happiness there. He loves with the love that cleaves to the last thing left, the dearest, the heart's innermost treasure, with the timorous needy love of the immemorially subservient, the conquered of many conquerors, for the one thing indefeasibly his own which his proud masters have left him.

This is why the eyes are so full of fear and anger that gaze through iron bars at the tall ships in the roadstead—the ships of the masters, their formidable beasts of burden with iron heart and fiery breath, the strong swift swimmers, that carry to Java from far lands, that carry away from Java to far lands, what the masters ordain; that carry precious goods and carry men dispossessed of all goods. Men of Java who have done the thing forbidden by the law of the masters they carry away from Java to alien and distant lands. Dark faces turn grey when the ship in the roadstead lifts her piercing voice as the signal for departure.

The jailer enters. He puts an iron collar on the necks of the prisoners condemned to deportation, iron manacles on their wrists. He drives the gang of chained convicts in their mud-brown garb forward on the road to the shore.

The men walk slowly. They cast about dull furtive looks, they lay

hold with their eyes on the humble houses in the native quarter, on the men and women in the road, on the naked children loitering about the stalls of the sellers of sweetmeats. They set their feet on the earth heavily, as if they would strike root there and grow fixed for ever, like trees. And in that last instant when the indifferent policeman pushes them into the prao, some one of the exiles will perhaps suddenly stoop and take up from the shore and hide against his heart a handful of earth—a handful of Java.

Why, indeed, should this not have happened more than once before or after that time when Westerners saw it?—passengers of a steamer bound for the Moluccas who, idly leaning over the railing, watched a man in a gang of convicts thus stoop; thus with his fettered hands, which moved but awkwardly, take up from the wave-washed shore and thus hide against his naked breast a handful of sand. Wondering they gazed at the brown man and his passion.

He was a young man—boy rather than man—lightly treading as a deer, with wild, frightened eyes. He carried himself as hill folk do, who in attitude and motion show their fellowship with the wind, the rapid runner on the hillside. When the policeman roughly pushed him into the prao, with his whole body he gave a sharp sideward jerk, like a captured animal bounding to escape.

The policeman drove the mud-brown troop through the jostling crowd on deck to the hatches, shut down upon the precious freight in the hold; they lay there like a heap of sorry stuff, not worth the stowing, left where the weary bearers had flung it down.

The policeman took off their fetters—of what use fetters in that one prison from which there is no escape, the ship on the high seas? But they sat as if still suffering that iron constraint on neck and arms—inert, stolid. He of the flashing eyes was among them as among dull ashes a live spark. He held his face immovably turned toward the sinking coast of Java; those flashing eyes burned into it. More than one of the passengers seated in the pleasant shade of the awning averted his gaze from the sight.

They were Hollanders, he was a Javanese. The fairness of their faces and hands, white, the proud hue of the conquering race in this land of the brown conquered, made brotherhood amongst themselves, made separation between them and those men who had a brown skin,

the indelible mark of defeat and servitude. Though they had not known about one another the day before, and would have forgotten one another the day after, yet they were comrades to-day, aboard this ship—this strong and wonderful thing wrought by brains and hands of their own race, which carried their common lot in soaring security between wave and wind. And they spoke and thought of the things which were their own, of overlordship and riches. Yet more than one of them felt and, feeling, was fain to avoid, that burning gaze at the coast of Java, at the fatherland sinking away in the sea.

A young, straight, fiery-eyed creature, such as that Javanese was, a creature like a flame—in many ways surely such a one might have erred against the law of the masters, the law that is of the intellect, that knows naught of sorrow or joy, but makes for power only, for the might of the mightiest and for whatever serves that might.

He surely would have danced gracefully, a reveller at the golden harvest feast of the rice, shone upon by the light from smiling maidens' eyes. Had he found a rival hidden in the garden of the fairest at nightfall?

At cock-fights when the bird, strong and eager for the fray after many months' training, flies at his enemy, neck feathers ruffled, when hacking bills and the shrewd stroke of claws armed with trenchant steel spurs make the blood spout from head and breast—he surely would have been a mad gambler. Had the winner laughed all too insolently as he carried away his dead cock?

Those eyes of his—like black flames they were—he had surely not cast them down humbly under a blow from a white hand. Had he wreaked his fury running amuck, blind with blood, killing he knew not whom?

Labour in exile is the punishment which the law of the Western masters metes out for gravest offenses. The masters of yore, the sultans who were adored and feared, as they had been gods, punished not according to law but as whim moved them—incalculable, incomprehensible whim—with punishments that were acts of vengeance, tortures, mutilations, rendings asunder of bone and sinew. Of this, too, they thought, who nevertheless were constrained to avert their gaze from those burning eyes. Among the other convicts, the native of Java sat solitary, shut up within his sorrow as within a windowless prison.

Around him there was a cautious muttering, behind the back of the sleepy policeman, about things of which the happy know not—rash deed, and flight, and capture, all in vain—of aching days of labour and nights afire with thoughts of revenge; about escape from exile. There were many voices that questioned and one voice that answered, a voice that derided the masters, the ignorant mighty, and extolled the cunning of the conquered, the innumerable tricks which the condemned of the masters' law teach one another, so that the simple man, whom his hot blood and the law of the alien drove, all blindly, into the secret brotherhood of the convicts, will grow subtle as the wily one of the woods, the dwarf deer, and dangerous as the deadly snake. Henceforth no wronged one will accuse him any more, no thief-taker will catch him, no judge will find a way to condemn him! The poisonous whispering found its way into the solitude of the native of Java as the intoxicating datura seed, which the burglar blows through a crevice, penetrates into the house where a man lies alone; as the eyes of the defenceless victim, so his eyes grew dim and dull.

And the ship hastened on, hastened through the long morning, the afternoon, the short red evening, the night; through the black night, moonless and starless, she found her way. She never swerved to left or right, she never hesitated, she never lagged; her screw spurned the Java Sea, her bow swallowed the distances ahead of her, she drew toward her the alien, the terrible land. At sunrise she would have reached the roadstead.

It was dark on the deck, still within the ship. Deep down in the stoke-hole the scorched stokers were at their work, blinking their red, lashless eyes at the blaze they incessantly fed with ancient heat, turned into black stone; in the stifling engine-room the engineer, breathing heavily, moved forward and backward amidst gliding, shoving, leaping steel; on the bridge the watch was on the lookout, the ship's sleepless eye, peering out into the night for any danger that might threaten her course. But all else slept. Within their fan-cooled cabins, into which ventilators drew the freshness of the spaces of sea and night without, the masters of the ship slept; scattered on the floor of the saloon, half in and half out of the white and red clothes which with the colours of the ship's flag marked them as the ship's property, the servants slept; in the second class, their heads pillowed on their ledgers with the packs

of cards and the bundles of banknotes they had been gambling with all day long, the Chinese slept; on deck, sarong drawn over head or arms folded over face to ward off the glare of the electric light, huddled family groups of natives slept. Even the convicts slept, side by side with the sleeping guard.

But suddenly sleepers everywhere awoke, a shriek ringing in their ears which made the heart stand still. And again, and yet once again it rang out, fainter and more piteous each time, farther off in the surging darkness of the sea. As if that wretched cry of a creature in agony had clutched at her in her headlong course, the ship slowed down and lay still. And passengers hurrying on deck saw the lifeboat making toward a blue flame on the water, far away in the ship's wake. The natives around the hatches whispered, eyeing askance the empty place among the convicts where had lain the man who had taken a handful of earth from the shore.

As the rescuers led him staggering up the gangway the policeman pounced upon him; he held the convict clutched with both fists as he brought him before the captain. Trembling with abject fear, livid, the native of Java stood in the intolerable light. The sea-water dripped from his torn convict's garb, darkening the deck around his feet. Like a damp, agony reeked from him. The captain questioned him. It was long before the all but inaudible answer came:

"I do not know. I was asleep. I awoke in the sea. Then I screamed for help."

In vain the captain pointed out how useless the awkward lie was, since evidently in quiet weather, and from the place where the convicts lay amidships, it was not possible for a man to fall overboard sleeping. The convict muttered again:

"I do not know. I was asleep. I awoke in the sea. Then I screamed for help."

Speaking more severely, the captain then said that the truth was manifest, and the convict had better confess so as not to aggravate his offense and of necessity his punishment; he had attempted to escape, and had leapt into the sea, hoping to swim to some islet where a roving opium-smuggler or fisherman would have picked him up and shipped him back to Java. But if, as his heart forsook him and he screamed out in the sea, the officer on watch had not heard and flung him the lifebuoy,

causing the ship to stop, and if the men of the lifeboat had not rowed out to him and seized him as he was sinking, he must have drowned, and even now the sharks would be tearing up his body. For no swimmer, not the boldest and strongest, could have reached any shore from the spot where he was sinking. Leagues and leagues around, there was nothing but open sea.

With a slow sweep of his white-sleeved arm the captain pointed over distances beyond distances of darkness toward the circling horizon invisible in the night. The onrush and the gurgling fall of the waves against the ship's sides broke through the unwonted stillness with a threatening sound. Overawing, the thought loomed up of the infinite loneliness of the seas.

The policeman pushed the rescued man back to his place among the other convicts. He passively suffered himself to be flung down upon the heap.

The slow night wore away. As he walked up and down the bridge, the officer on watch found his glance returning again and again to the mud-brown heap of convicts in the fierce glare of the electric light, to the one figure sitting erect amongst the prostrate sleepers. He had drawn over his head the sarong given him instead of his drenched convict's garb. His hands folded around his knees, he sat motionless. Once, at a chance glimpse, the officer thought he saw a small huddled-up shape glide away from him. But then again he thought it must have been the shadow of the sail that had slightly stirred in the breeze.

The dark watcher sat still as a stone: as one waiting. In the dew-cold hour before dawn, harvesters guarding the gathered sheaves sit thus in the village rice-fields of Java. They are waiting for the sun, for the recommencement of life. What was he waiting for?

Night was almost over. Around the faded morning star the sky was growing transparently white. The Javanese raised his face toward the coming dawn; then for a long while he gazed toward the west; the sky was dark as yet, over there. At last, very gently, with a movement of child-like compliance, he lay down. He drew the border of his sarong over his eyes as if to sleep deeply in darkness, and lay still, utterly at rest.

As one who at the end of a vigil beholds afar his heart's desire appearing—now he may well close his eyelids over the blessed sight, he

may well stretch his weary limbs along the path of that assured approach—even so he lay.

Day broke.

There where the red light shone, land hove in sight. It stood, a dull, faint-coloured wedge in the core of the purple blaze that was setting sea and sky immensely aflame. The ship made straight for it. Faces irradiated by the dawn were turned toward the Moluccan island as it rose on the view, lifting scintillating hilltops in a still deepening splendour of diaphanous blue.

In the transfiguring glory of the dawn, with the sheen all around of gladdened faces and eyes alight with a new beginning, a new hope, that heap of castaway humanity, the mud-brown gang of convicts, showed all the sorrier. In dull apathy the exiles gazed at the thing feared with the fear of death: the alien land.

The yawning policeman reached out for the manacles. The hands that had done against the law of the masters were to be barred from all self-willed doing, henceforth. When, after others had passively surrendered neck and wrists to the clasp of the iron, that one man never moved nor heeded his call, the policeman sullenly seized the arm lying limp and long beside the body. But he hastily withdrew his hand, startled.

Two of the convicts, who had squatted down at head and foot of that still shape, their manacled hands hanging between their knees, looked from him to the man who held the fetters. And the one of them uttered a word, a short word of deep and terrible sound. He had not said it aloud. And yet, all heard.

The word passed over the ship, over the motley crowd of natives on the fore-deck, over the groups of Chinese at the entrance of the second-class cabin, over the company of Hollanders shining in their white clothes under the awning. As if out of a sunlit lake a dark monster had suddenly lifted its head, and now gloom spread in widening ripples until all the glory had gone down before it, so at that one word an awed gravity overcast faces in an ever spreading circle, until there was not one but wore a still look.

Some one came and bent over the dead man, lifting the sarong from his face. It lay revealed, very young, almost smilingly gentle. It shone with a radiancy purer than the pure sunshine that lit up the brow and

The Sea

the pale mouth. There was a space around it wider than all the spaces of the infinite sea. So perfect was that serene quietude, no man still groping through the clamorous darknesses of life would have dared disturb it with a shadow of those darknesses, would have dared utter the word of suffering and despair which was the name of that streak of whitish powder still clinging to the half-open lips.

A wizened little old woman, who furtively hid something still deeper down under jealously guarded market-ware, stooped and hid behind those next to her, as the medical officer, raising his head, looked about him.

He questioned the dead man's two friends:

"Why did he do this thing, he who called for help against death?"

The one of the two spoke slowly:

"When he would have drowned himself in the sea, his body feared, so that he needs must call for help. But his soul desired death and remained constant. For bitterer than death it was to him to live far from Java."

They left him the sarong of the Javanese peasant when they buried him on the alien shore.

ENCOUNTERS AT SEA

I. RECOGNITION

IT was the wild western coast of Ceram, the stronghold once of slave-hunters and pirates. Between a sky dark with stormy cloud-rack and a dull grey sea palely writhing with slow trails of foam, the forbidding rock rose black. Puny the ship lay under the lowering steep. The passengers sat silent as if the darkness that overcast the sea and the sky, that seemed to be exhaled by those sombre heights, lay black and heavy on their own hearts too.

Down the beach, a narrow strip of pale sands clinging to the base of the rocks, there moved a long file of coolies heavily burdened and stooping under the load. It seemed to go on for ever, beginningless and endless, that long file, still gliding on between the rocks and the ship, dimly discerned in the grey of mist and sea-vapour. The faces of those stooping figures remained invisible, hidden between raised arms and down-hanging load. Each like every other, all in that identical attitude of strained bearing and stooping, they came gliding on, naked and dark, as if out of the dark rock, soundless, almost immaterial, a train of phantoms breathed forth out of hidden depths.

What thing was it that held them so deeply bowed down, and that, when the dangling grapnel had caught it up from the beach and lowered it down into the hold, fell so heavily as to cause the ship to sink still deeper and deeper under the load?

The merchant from the distant harbour town, who distrustfully counted the bearers, spoke of wood-produce, the sole harvest of this wild island—rattan, and deer's skins and horns, and lumps of speckled-wood, the diseased excrescences on the roots of huge trees in the primeval forest, more valued than the sound stem, since some rich man's whim chose it for the decoration of his palace. And of this too spoke the young army officer with the ghastly cicatrice across his forehead, sent out to crush the rebellion which alien traders had instigated amongst the head-hunting Alfoors of the interior.

But it seemed impossible that the thing which made that train of

phantoms bend down so deeply and the ship herself stagger like an overburdened slave should be but deer's skins and horns and gnarled boles. It could be nothing on which the sun had ever shone. The inscrutable procession bore a thing unbearable, heavy and cold and black as the rock out of which the dark bearers issued. Not on their backs they bore it, but in their hearts. And it was because of this that the seamews, restlessly wheeling about the ship, screamed so loudly and shrilly, with such piercing shrieks. How they cried woe and vengeance with their discordant clamour, to which the echoes made answer complainingly!

Even thus, on this very coast, shrieked in utter need and despair the wretches whom the Ceram pirates assailed. Even thus resounded, from the steep of the rock and out of hidden caverns, the lamentation of prisoners haled into the stronghold hard of access, impossible to escape from. There sat the Sea King, like an eagle on a crag, spying into the distance for sails. Wings spread, the trading prao fled. Pale faces, distorted with fear, turned toward the reef where the pirates' skiff, quick as the darting snake, lay in wait. The rowers, dry-throated, panting, strained to breaking their hurrying arms and bodies spasmodically pulling, as they strained away from the fearsome thing from which they could not keep their haggard eyes. The limpid water grew red as, with a leap fiercer than the tiger's upon the wild cow, the Ceram prao seized the trader.

But red into all distances, red with the red of blood and the red of fire, grew the waves and the hills when he came who was stronger than that strong one, he who slew tens of thousands for the hundreds slain by the Alfoor—the conqueror from the West, who struck not as the Alfoor struck, with hands merely in which there was the weight of wood and stone and the edge of metal for a weapon; nay, he struck with his thought also, and with the elements which by the power of his thought he had changed into his weapons, with earth transformed into a thunderous flame, with air pressed into a death-hurling sling. He spoiled the spoiler, he hunted the hunter, he slew the slayer, he left none alive but slaves. Then the thing began which was to endure into a future beyond sight, which endures even at this present day; endures in secret, creeping in tortuous darknesses, in the forests of the wild interior, in the black western firths clamorous with the shrieks of seagulls, in the hearts of the isle-folk. Then the thing began under which

they stooped rancorously, even as those burdened coolies stooped, who hid their faces as they came down the narrow strip of beach toward the Westerners' ship—the ship of the strong-of-thought, in which they have the seething sea-waves for their rowers, and call the lightning to their mast-heads for their messenger—as they came carrying on their bent backs in tribute to the conqueror the growth of the soil once their own.

The gnarled logs and the trusses of rattan, the deer's skins and antlers—how ill the load of it all hid that other burden which they bore, the black weight so unbearably heavy that even the strong ship sank under it like an overburdened slave!

The ship's passengers, the Westerners, the masters of all those bearers of burdens, they felt the heaviness of it on their own hearts.

In a different way each felt the pain dimly felt by all. For in each heart it grew to be a thing by itself, indivisibly one with its own innermost pain, pain suffered, pain inflicted, pain that was named sorrow, pain that was named sin, pain named with whatever other name the confusing words of men may find for it.

As a sick serpent, writhing, raises its head out of its crevice under the hunter's probing spear-thrust, so, stabbed, the ancient pain writhed up out of darkest heart's fold; and an inexorable voice commanded: "Suffer yet more!"

The seagulls made plaintive answer.

The wandering screams were so loud, so long in lamentation, that it was a while before a listener of finer ear than the others discerned among the crying voices of the birds the voice of a woman crying. He hearkened, dismayed. But that piteous voice suddenly fell silent again. And it was only the gulls that were heard still shrieking, as if still hunted onward, wheeling about the ship.

But when the officer with the terrible cicatrice mustered his men, he heard from them how a young woman, a girl, hardly more than a child, whom they pointed out to him cowering away trembling, in a corner of the after deck, had all but been haled away by two Alfoors who had posed as her kinsmen, but who had been denounced to the captain as slave-hunters, preying upon women and young boys whom they abducted in their fast-sailing ships to the Eastern islands for the service of cruel masters.

At the tale, one of the passengers said it was impossible to think there could be slaves there where the Netherlands maintained law and order; and another rejoiced in the salvation of the girl, and her trust in the ruling race, that had been so well justified. And it almost seemed as if the dark shadow fallen from the steep of the gloomy island vanished out of brightening eyes; as if the heaviness which the stooping phantom train of coolies had laid on thought were sliding off, and that ancient pain sank into slumber again, when the officer, turning his courageous marked face in going, exclaimed that, within a few weeks, life and freedom would be as safe in Ceram as they are in Holland.

But then the one who, alone, had heard the shriek of the hunted girl asked: "Where in this world are life and freedom safe to-day? Which is the Sanctuary that Greed dare not enter as it pursues Need?"

No one answered.

In deepest dark of the heart the old pain shrank back from the Pursuer's recognized gaze.

II. THE SOMETHING OTHER

Around was the infinite.

But the sheltering ship screened them from it. Her strong hull, her superposed canvas roofs, her manifold fittings were between their feet and the depths, their heads and the heights, their sight and the distances. As, in an unfelt speed, she bore them along between waves and clouds, they sat ensconced in a soft smooth safety as of home, amidst familiar comforts, refined to a luxury that, mingling with their blood like the tropical air, soothed them into a dreamy content.

The silent servants, moving inaudibly on bare feet, had brought to the table, set out in a breezy place on deck, goblets, dim with cold, of golden-brown wine and profusely heaped dishes of fruit, ruddy apples, fresh as when with a soft thud they dropped into the deep dewily shining September grass, apricots flushing between yellow and crimson, full clusters of grapes, transparently white, some with opal-like gleams of faintest brown and pink, others blue almost to blackness, the bloom upon the large perfectly sphered berries intact, figs, purple at the core, melon-slices, brilliantly hued. One of the passengers expressing ad-

miration, the captain, carelessly as it seemed, named the various countries in which the ship's purveyor had chosen the pick of the market; and the talk, gliding on in questions and answers, glanced from the dark Spanish wine in the goblets where the ice made a faint fine tinkling against the crystal, to the white marble of the table, the furniture in the smoking-room and the saloon, yesterday's dinner. And countries were named, each for a special produce, selected each for a special quality of softness to the sense—Spain, Italy, Brazil, the jungles of Borneo, Alpine meadows, vineyards of France, the Newfoundland coast, Australian cattle-ranges—till it seemed as if somewhere in the far away, they were lying there, dark and soft in their fleece of forests and undulating harvests, like a herd of gigantic milch-cows, patiently yielding an abundance of sweet food.

A middle-aged man, with an able energetic face, observed: "Ah, that is what 'civilization' means." And the others gravely nodded assent.

A youngster, reddening boyishly, said: "The Oriental having proved himself absolutely incapable of achieving this, the Westerners' supremacy over him . . ."

"Exactly," said the able-faced man decisively.

And the youngster, blushing still more deeply, added: "As his teacher and guardian, I meant . . ."

No one noticed. For there was a sudden cry: "A wreck, a wreck! and men on it, signalling!"

Black on the sparkling blue of the sea, a raft tossed, half submerged. Something dark fluttered above the crouching shapes huddled together on it. The captain, frowning, gave an order to the young ship's officer who had come up to him. The ship changed her course, heading for the raft.

"Three men on it!"

"Yellow men—Chinese."

"They hardly move. All but dying, it would seem."

As the steamer reached them one of the gaunt, livid-faced shapes made a gesture of drinking. Pails of water were lowered to them and heaped-up baskets of rice.

They flung themselves upon the water, thrusting their heads into it, and gulped with a horrible rattling sound, in convulsive gasps that

shook their angular shoulder-blades and flanks all hollow under the jutting ribs. At last, raising dripping faces with water running out of the mouths, they struck claw-like hands into the rice and bit at their fists, clenched upon the food. The hollow faces were livid under bristling tags of hair burnt rusty-red; the plaits hung down their lean backs matted and filthy, like the tails of sick beasts; there were loathsome whitish blotches on their legs and feet.

At last, glutted, they looked up into the crowd of faces gazing down at them over the railing of the tall ship.

One of the three called out something, in a hurtling jerky language.

A reply came in similar sounds. A sudden gleam lit up the dull faces. The three of them together, they shouted at the man who understood their dialect. They were, they said, men of Hai-Nan, trading along the coast from the gulf of Tongking to Rangoon. The monsoon had seized and disabled their junk. Miles out of their course they had drifted, till they ran upon a reef. There the gale and the breakers battered the junk to pieces, and one of them died. They had tied together boards into a raft, and for three days and three nights rowed and drifted whither the wind tossed them. They had all but gone mad with thirst; was it far to the coast still?

The captain pointed to where, invisible still under the horizon, the summits lay of the Sumatran hill-range.

A boat was lowered, in which there lay oars and a compass.

The Chinamen carried into it a long bundle done up in mats, that had lain carefully fastened to the raft. And the interpreter asked them what most precious possession it might be that, of all their goods, they had solely saved out of the wreck and, in such imminent danger of foundering, carried with them for three days and three nights.

But at the answer they made, he stood as one who does not understand or is unable to believe. And he asked again.

And the bony livid face, bristled about with spikes of reddish-black hair, that looked up into his face, nodded, and said "Yes," with mouth and eyes. Yes. Yes. And the other man pronounced a few words, and the third a few words also, in a still tone.

Then he who had asked became as a beach that lets the ebb flow off and, utterly empty and wide, bares itself to the tide coming on resplendent and thunderous.

He turned toward the people on the ship and said slowly, and as he spoke his face grew pale and luminous: "Their comrade who died in the gale, his body they rescued from the wreck, in order to bury him as the holy law ordains, in the land of his forefathers; that his soul may be at peace in eternity."

It became very still on the ship. Many eyes were cast down.

But the captain gave a hurried order. Men came running with long poles and thrust off from the ship the vessel of death. It glided away over the waves. Those who stood gazing after it saw it dwindle into a darkly tossing speck upon the blue.

If thoughts could grow visible, a fairer radiance than of resplendent sea-birds' flight would have shone about the dead man and the guardians of his soul, about the will that sought the infinite.

III. SHIPS DANCING

Over the darkling sea, out of the unseen, the subtle fragrance had come floating toward the ship—the fragrance of the tropical eucalyptus, which Malays call the whitewood-tree, Kayoo-pootih. And at dawn the island rose into view, grey as rain and grey as mist, grey with Kayoo-pootih woods. Grey the straight slender stems, grey and straight and slender as streaks of rain on a windless day. Along the steep rock the innumerable frail white trees make a streaky greyness as of continuous rain. And the delicate pale airy foliage hangs like drifts of mist over rain-saturated soil.

The captain pointed at the cloud-like island.

"That is Booroo, Booroo of the Kayoo-pootih woods. Do you smell the scent on the wind? And see, here the traders are coming with the precious oil!"

The boats, large and small, were coming on in shoals. Chinese junks were foremost, and Booghi ships, proud of build and bow as seventeenth-century galleys. Orembays of the Moluccas followed, rowed by twenty rowers, outriggers resembling a large water-bird with a young one at either side, and, agile as flying fish, dugouts, darting past and through the press of the other craft.

The passengers were standing by the railing; the traders came clambering on to the deck. Then a giving and taking began that made silver

Booroo

to gleam in brown palms and brightly green flasks of oil in white hands and yellow.

The beautiful Arab woman by whose side an even more beautiful daughter stood, held out a gold piece toward the important-looking Chinese merchant whom coolies followed carrying heavy cases. The girl with the dusky face, soft as a flower within its setting of diamonds dewily sparkling at her ears and throat, smiled when, as the lid fell back, the spicy scent rose toward her.

A bevy of gaudily dressed women and serving-men were beckoning to the traders, to bring them oil for the harem of the Sultan of Batjan.

There were folk from Ambon aboard—Christians in name, they had not lost the ancient Pagan delight in sweet scents. They came hastening toward the oil, and the women poured drops of it on the lace handkerchiefs in which they wrap their hymn books when, of a Sunday, they go to church to show their fine clothes; and letting it trickle along their fingers they spread it over the glossy ripples and wavelets of their blue-black hair.

Even the white people bought, though somewhat diffidently, on account of that bright green colour which is caused by the copper of the primitive native still.

And still barges, praos, dugouts, kept crowding around the steamer, and still the brown islanders kept carrying cases, crates, and panniers full of oil into the hold.

For in northern lands where the sun shines but palely athwart mist and smoke, where trees stand bare of leafage and fragrance for many months together and limbs stiffen and ache with cold, millions were waiting for the sparkling medicine distilled out of odorous leafage and sunshine.

At close of day the ship from keel to deck was as full of oil as, at the end of a plentiful summer, hives are full of honey. It gave forth fragrance as Booroo does, that for miles around makes sweet the sea air. The railing and the very tackle, for all it was soaked and sated with the pungent smell of the sea, exhaled a breath of Kayoo-pootih.

Well content, the traders had looked at the small rolls of silver coins before they hid them away in a fold of their waist-cloths. They thrust off their praos from the steamer.

But not all the boats headed for the island. A group of the larger

ones remained near, one taking up a place behind another, lying in file as if expectant.

Then a tall Booghi ship, under dark red sails, with a stately motion glided out of the file. And striking up a festive music, with a great sound of bronze gongs, of drums, and of flutes, it swept in a wide circle around the steamer, round and round again. All the other ships followed, rowing and sailing; in the wake of the Booghi ship they swept round and around the steamer, wheeling in wide circles and singing as they went. Each one sang a song of his own—each of these great water-birds, these stately swans of the sea. Every bird sang in his own notes —with shrilly sweet piping and chirping the lesser; the greater in deeply resonant bursts of sound in powerful bronze voices.

The sun set. The sea was all empurpled. The red sails of the Booghi ship caught the evening breeze and flamed up, transparently resplendent.

All ablaze the beautiful ship sailed, purple over the purple sea, leading the choral dance of the ships.

Round and round the steamer it swept melodiously. The musicians were playing with a will, the rowers kept time with a raising and dipping of oars; merrily sailed the fleet.

As, in happier days, youths and maidens danced singing around the May Queen, desiring not nor envying, rejoicing in her beauty, so the Eastern vessels danced around the Western ship, rejoicing.

The men and women of the West, of the lands where joy is as rare and fleeting as the sunshine, gazed wondering. In the evening glow their faces were red as roses. As the ship was filled full of precious fragrance, their hearts were filled full of gladness.

THE HUNTER

THE hunter and his servant, the white master and the brown servant, who have grown to be comrades whilst hunting together, are watching for game, on the border of the grass-grown clearing in the heart of the forest. They do not care what it is that comes to them; it is sure to be a strong animal or a quick animal, one that has strength to attack or one that has strength to escape; sure to be something to kill.

As they are watching now, on the border of the wood-meadow, so they watch always in all places. At the edge of the forest where the hard immovable bodies of the trees do not crowd together so closely but soft hurrying bodies of animals may slip through; and on the shore of the mountain lake, in the night, where many thirsty ones bend down to drink and, having slaked their thirst, stand for a while motionless and dark against the sky, whilst drops like liquid sparks of moonlight drip from the wide nostrils about which the breath stands out like a silvery mist; and in the tall grass of the wilderness that lifts its grey blossom-plumes high above a man's head, in the dangerous alang-alang that hides from one another the pursuer and the pursued, so that the one never knows about the other or about himself, whether he hunt or be hunted; and they watch in their own home, too, in their own smooth, white house.

As other men the hunter lives in a house, and does the things that are done within the walls and under the roof of a house—easy things, done without passion, to sate and foster the body, and difficult things, done without passion too, for the sake of such fostering in future. He eats food which others prepare for him and set forth on a table spread with white linen, he puts on thin, cool clothes, he has a smooth floor under his feet, sits down in an easy chair, and sleeps on a bed that is carefully made. It is all the same to him whether the storm shriek and the rains stream down, or whether the scorching sun flame in the skies; he is dry under his roof, cool within his walls. And he reads, ponders, and writes, that he may be certain this same well-fed, well-sheltered, well-cared-for life may still continue. No other purpose has he in this, no other

wish. But as he sits in his smooth, white house doing these things dispassionately, because of custom and necessity, the desire for his true life waits, restless and fell. He thinks of the great spaces without, beyond his walls, over his roof, the infinite spaces that teem with animals —the grass, the water, the wood, the hills, the air, teeming with animals. He is all a-tremble with desire and impatience. The while his eyes read, his hand writes, his mouth eats, the while his body lies stretched out, his innermost thought sits watching, spying for animals to kill. Because his own eyes are blinded and his own ears are deafened, so many times and for so many hours together within the entombing house, he has eyes and ears in other men who go about spying and listening all day. In the evening they come to him to tell him of what they have found.

When the translucent green that after sunset spreads its tranquil lakes around purple and golden cloud-islets, begins to dull and to ebb away in the western sky, when the trees of the garden grow immense, broadening, heightening into stupendous dimensions as they exhale innermost darkness, when the smooth white things within the house sink and disappear before the rising tide of night, the hunter sits behind the tall pillars of the verandah as behind tall, smooth tree-trunks at the border of the wood, watching. His cigar gleams out toward the dark highway like the tiny lantern which cricket-hunters hide amongst leaves to lure the light-loving chirpers. And, as easily lured as they, natives approach who know there are silver coins waiting behind that spark. Voices come out of the darkness:

"I crave permission."

Well content the hunter answers, "Come and stand before me." Vaguely discernible figures crouch on the nethermost step of the verandah.

"Tooan, every night deer come to drink at the brook that flows past the bamboo copse."

"A herd of wild pigs has broken through all my fences, into the sweet-potato plantation! Alas, alas! they have rooted up and devoured all the crop."

"A tiger, Tooan, prowls around the hill village. We found his trail near the buffalo pen."

The hunter's heart is set throbbing. He questions the villagers to

The Hunter

know the hour and the spot, the animals' wonted haunts. Gladly the native feels the small coin in his palm. Gladly the hunter calls to his comrade, "Djongolan! Djongolan!" Djongolan is standing behind him already. He has been sitting in the dark near the house. He too has been on the watch. He too has been hunting—all the time—and his finer ear has caught the sound of those naked footsteps before they left the road. "Djongolan! look after the guns. See that rice is boiled in a plaited bag of fresh banana-leaf strips. See that water is filled into bamboo cases. We will go hunting to-morrow morning before dawn."

Now they may light the lamp over the writing table! It is no matter if the piles of books and papers be never so high. The hunter sits down whistling, and all through the monotonous work he hears the music of the guns clicking in Djongolan's hands, the music of his movements and voice in the go-down and in the kitchen. As he stretches himself on the cool sheet of his bed he thinks, "To-morrow night I shall lie on dry leaves, and I shall see the light of the watch-fire playing through the trees overhead."

The comrades are in the midst of the wood when the morning star still hangs, brimful of light, in the dark sky. Silently and surely they go through the sulky blackness of the wood. Night is about their feet, night against their faces, and the dewy fulness of leaves. Immeasurably high overhead, a glowing purple vault rises, seen through dark tree-tops as through dark, low-drifting clouds. The air smells of life. Where the smell is dull and lies still, there is the motionless life of earth and stones. Even as through a dark rippleless pool living water will sometimes come welling up in smallest bubbles, even as somewhere through the ooze of its banks a tiny rill flows out, thus, through the dull, still smell of earth and stones, a smell of beginning life in moss and fungi floats up, a smell of ending life in rotting leaves and decayed wood floats out and is lost in the air. Where smells are sweet and hang tranquilly, there is the balmy-breathed life of new-budded leafage, and flowers deeply hidden that have bloomed overnight. Where smells are sharp and fugitive, like sudden rays, there the rapid lives of animals have passed by. Was it a bird, warm from the darkling nest? A red-eyed squirrel that with a swinging leap bounded into the leafage where it is densest? Or perhaps a wild cow wandered past, with her calf

nuzzling her full udder as it went. Perhaps that pungent smell rose from the dripping sides of a stag that swam across the lake to the hind browsing among the tall reeds of the shore.

The two men breathe deep. They sniff the air. They drink in the multitudinous life. Their own grows stronger and wilder with it. Their eyes grow fierce. They tread noiselessly. They warn one another without speech, with hands and eyes. Underfoot, around, overhead, the forest is like a mountain of leaves, and they move along the all but invisible paths of charcoal burners and of the wood-rangers that tap the areng palm for its sweet juice, as along passages burrowed by moles into the solid greenness. Often, too, they have to hew out their way themselves. With their short, broad knives they hack into brushwood and saplings and through the masses of the thorny rattan that cuts at them with hooked whips. The leeches, raining down upon them out of the shaking leaves, hang on and sting so fiercely that their clothes are red with their own blood. They do not heed; they are hunting. Purplish blue and golden green, a woodcock flaps his wings. A catamount spits at them, her yellow eyes ablaze. Howling with fear, a troop of monkeys leap through a tree past which the black-spotted panther creeps. And as often as the hunter, motionless and well-hidden for a while, takes aim, an animal, broken and bleeding, drops with a shrill scream.

In the tall grass of the wilderness that makes the hillside to glisten palely in the sun, the tiger has his lair. Snake-like he winds through the tall stalks; swift as a flash of lightning he strikes the deer herd browsing among the young shoots, or the wild pigs that burrow up the sweetest roots of the alang-alang. Sated and heavy with blood, he lies asleep in the bamboo copse that rises sheer above the grey seas of grass. The peacocks come out and perch in the branches; his followers they, who live on his leavings. Greenish blue and golden, their tails gleam like some dark rainbow among drifting clouds of leafage. Their sharp heads with the diaphanous blue crests glisten as they stretch bending necks to peer down. Among the black and the yellow of shadows and sunbeams, has not other black and yellow stirred? Has it not slowly risen in a stretching of supple limbs, whilst blood-red jaws yawn under a gleam of cruel eyes? Resplendent in the noonday glare they take flight, screaming for joy.

In the alang-alang wilderness the deer hear, and flee in flying leaps; the wild pigs hear and break into a gallop, shaking the ground with the thud of their hammering hooves. In the meagre rice-fields of the hillside, the peasants hear, and throw down spade and mattock as they run toward the gate of the village, narrowly opening into the enclosure of sharply pointed posts. Within the plaited huts of the hamlet, the women hear, and rush out for their children at play out-of-doors. At the border of the wood the hunter hears. The hunter rejoices. The comrade leads the timorous men into the alang-alang in a wide semicircle, that with shouting and the beating of hollow wood blocks they may drive the tiger toward the edge of the forest. There the hunter stands watching, leaning against a tree, his back toward the tiger. He hears a scouring, shuffling sound drawing nearer and nearer. He stands motionless, tense, from his head that listens and thinks rapidly to his finger that waits on the trigger. Branches break under a soft, heavy tread; a poisonous breath, a stench of blood and decay, goes past; he sees the shambling black and yellow shanks. On the spot he has chosen, thirty paces away, his bullet strikes the tiger in the neck. When the terrible beast leaps up, when it turns roaring and that flaming head comes at him, his second shot goes home.

The comrade bends over the open, bleeding jaws to pull out the whiskers, which he hides in the folds of his head-cloth for a talisman. The villagers come running; they know the hunter will turn over the quarry to them, that they may claim the prize-money. Eight of them carry the stupendous carcass slung upon a bamboo trunk that bends, creaking. The white of belly and throat, grown so delicately for the shade and the cool green and brown gleams of the forest soil, is turned toward the fierce sunlight; the great head hangs dangling; the nose and the golden glassy eyes, the broad forehead, strike against stones and knotted roots. The hunter averts his eyes.

When the comrades follow up a trail, through the wood, along the ravine, up the steep hillside, they never think of giving up the quest until they overtake the stag or the dangerous wild bull, the lone one whom the herd has driven out. Then they forget ways and hours. The heat of the day is lessening. Farther and farther away from them like to a couple of small black animals, the two shadows of their heads run

along the hillside among boulders and bushes and, suddenly, high up against trees. They are somewhere in the unknown, where no men live.

The comrade begins searching. By the trunk of an areng palm into which notches have been cut for a ladder, by a charred piece of wood on the ground or a barely perceptible smell of burning on the wind, he guesses the path to the wood-ranger's hut, or to the smouldering pile of the charcoal burners in some as yet far-off clearing. But the hunter eschews as if it were a prison all human habitation, even one which, like a bird's nest, is made of plaited twigs and leaves, and through which the wind plays, and the changeful lights of the heavens by day and night. He needs the great spaces of the limitless world about him that freely flow and freely rise out into all distances, up into all heights—such as environ all beings except man only. On an airy hill-top he lights his watch-fire; the light of the flames shall be the thin dancing wall around his defenceless sleep in the night.

The comrade sits warming himself at the fire, drying his drenched clothes and chilled skin. He feels for the thorns and chards that have pierced deep into his feet and tears off the leeches, all swollen and black, that are sticking to his legs. Meanwhile, he watches the roasting of the deer's haunch, stuck on a green branch from which the juice drops into the fire hissing. After the meal he is drunk with repletion, fatigue, sleep. And the hunter, seeing how he no longer has any power over his head and eyelids, how he cannot hinder them from bending and hanging down like flowers wilting, says with a smile that the comrade may go and sleep; he himself will watch the fire, their protection in the night.

Now he is alone; thus he would choose to be. And around him the night is like a black sea, rolling in waves under the wind like the sea, teeming with life like the sea. He sits still. Overhead are the lofty stars, a cloud slowly sailing, the hanging leafage through which the firelight plays. No limits anywhere, no narrowness. He feels the great motions that go on through all eternity, resistless, all-pervading. In the chill of the black earth, in the radiance of the stars, in the wind that blows through the surging trees and is still again, in the light noises here and there, in his own breathing, he feels the never-ending course of life, the never-ending course of birth and death. Like waves, like the great waves of the sea, that still are coming and still are going, that

fling themselves on one another, and strike down and swallow one another so that one swells and grows immense with the gulping-in of the overthrown, but from its triumphant height crashes down and subsides and is dispersed: even thus the innumerable lives are still coming and still going, the quick, strong, devouring lives that wrathfully fling themselves upon one another, every greater one on every lesser one; and on the many feeble ones devoured a stronger one grows surpassingly, until from its topmost height it is hurled down, and is no more —the flaming eyes, the claws that struck down and gripped, the devouring jaws that tore open and drank so much of life, are no more. Never to be anything again. Ever to be everything again. A new life springs where a past life sank. There is no decrease from any disappearing, ever; there is no increase from any appearing, ever. What was from the beginning is to-day. What then does it mean when a man says *I?* What then is that which takes on the semblance of birth? And what in truth underlies the appearance of death?

The flames sink and pale. The hunter, musing, throws twigs and dry leaves on the fire. Around a branch that is half alive yet, blackish-green, the flame hisses writhing among twists of vapour and smoke. The comrade stirs and mutters in his sleep. What was that noise, hard by? And now, that cry? The hunter lifts his head, listening sharply. His thought sees in the dark. He knows how the snake in writhing curves ran up the tree and seized the small monkey in a loop that broke its ribs; he follows the luwak as with dripping mouth it slips out of the nest where the ringdove sat, spreading her wings over her callow young ones; he guesses the spot where the crouching panther leapt on the deer. He throws more wood on the fire, and draws deeper into the circle of radiance what remains of his booty—a couple of green-winged wild ducks, maybe, brought down as out of the blackish reeds along the river they flew up into the purple sunset sky, or a long-legged heron that sailed on wide-stretched wings over his whitish reflection in the swamp. He listens, his nostrils quiver, his mouth stands half open in the grey rough beard. Is there still more of life there, still more of fell death? And he holds his breath to hear the better, suddenly, far away, the shrill hoarse lowing of the rhinoceros.

In a steep pass between mountains rising high above the sea—the rivers falling down from their sides hang in cascades that cease in mid-

air, a floating whiteness over the up-leaping whiteness of the surf—in a deep vale between the rocks over which he has hollowed out his way, scouring out the stone with his heavily hanging belly, the terrible bull stands, blacker than the black night around, a clenched darkness. He stands immovable, ponderous, a hill of strength. He roars with rage, with angry desire to crash into another such as he, another black thunderous hill of heat and strength. He makes the valley to shake with the stamping of his feet. He sniffs the wind in which he scents his rival. The white of his terrific horn breaks through the night when he throws up his bent head with a jerk.

The hunter sees it as if he saw it with his eyes; he frowns in despite because he cannot win his way through the blind night. And the comrade, who has waked up, half raises himself leaning on his elbow—his face with the protruding cheek-bones and the receding chin is strangely contorted in the light of the flames—and tells how Malays kill the rhinoceros, secure from the danger that threatens from this strongest and fiercest of all beasts of the forest: in the rhinoceros's hollowed-out path over the rocks they plant a knife, the handle dug well into the ground, the point upward, so that the heavily trailing belly cuts itself open against it. But the hunter never answers. Maybe he never heard those sayings about safety and easily got booty, he who from the innermost heart's depths up to the outer rim of the senses is filled full with the one lust for life and for death which hurls every strong one upon every other strong one.

In him, the man of lonely life who already is beginning to grow old, this desire has been for so long a time that, for all he knows, it was there always. So great and strong it has grown during these many years of hunting, so absolutely the greatest, absolutely the strongest, that, for all he knows, it is the only desire in him. That is why the confusion was so great when, suddenly, in an hour that in no way differed from all other hours, whilst he sat watching for some creature to kill, and he cared not what it was that came; when in that instant a feeling rose within him before which that great and strong one crouched and slunk away. And to this day he does not well understand what it was that happened to him in that moment.

He sat watching at the border of a clear meadow in the heart of the forest, well hidden, with those keen eyes of his; and, well hidden too, his comrade sat not far away from him. They held in their hands the death of many animals; well content, they were waiting to let it loose on some strong wild life. The meadow lay light green in the earliest sunshine. The red blossoms of the many mimosa plants stood shining above the dew-whitened fans of still-folded leaflets.

Suddenly there was a violent crashing of brushwood. Almost at the same instant two animals, a brownish one, a yellowish one striped with black, leapt out of the dense leafage into the open and sunlit meadow. They stood still for a second, affrighted by the strong sun. But then, loosely as the wind runs out through the leaves, the one ran away, the other ran after, and the two began a game of playful chasing and fleeing all through the blossoming meadow and round and round about in rapid circles. The one that playfully chased was a fawn, the one that playfully fled was a tiger cub.

The fawn ran on high, woody legs; it held its delicate head capriciously on one side, and when it pretended to butt at its playfellow with that round little forehead about which the hair crinkled softly, it suddenly, all four feet off the ground, made a bound which surprised itself and stood quite startled. The tiger cub had a thick soft head, thick soft paws, a little belly that stood out all round and full of suck. The white about its mouth looked like milk. And it ran as if it ran for its life. It drew back its ears, laying them flat to its head; it darted through the grass, crouched, peered at its playfellow, and flung itself down on its flanks to await him. There it lay like a patch of sunshine, and its black stripes looked like so many shadows thrown by leaves of grass and mimosa stalks.

The little fawn came stepping gingerly, with stiff legs, its head on one side. It stood still, looking like a brown lump of forest soil, dappled over with round patches of sunlight that falls through leaves hanging quite still. Flattening itself against the ground, the little tiger came crawling toward him; its shoulder-blades stood up and on its back, thin and angular, its short blunt tail quivered. It crouched as if about to spring; but just then the fawn leapt with an impetus that carried it clean over the tiger cub and quite a distance out into the meadow before it could stop. The little tiger was off before the other came to a

stand. It ran, and the fawn ran after through grass and flowers, scattering the dew. Like the wind through waving grasses the little tiger ran; like the wind through bushes and nodding ferns the fawn leapt; like sunbeams the striped playfellow gleamed, like patches of sunlight the dappled one.

And suddenly, as wind and gleams of sunlight are gone, so they were gone, both at the same instant. It was only when the comrade muttered that they would not come back any more now, that the hunter became aware he had sat waiting. Had he been sitting there, so quietly, among the green leaves, forgetting his gun, smiling? And he saw that the comrade too was smiling. He went home, slowly, without speaking.

That evening, when the natives came with tidings such as a hunter loves to hear, he gave them the coin he always gave, but he asked them no questions nor did he call for his comrade. He sat in the dark with himself, as with a stranger, for a long time after they were gone, whilst the crickets began to chirp among the leaves, and the stars came out in the sky, so clear, so still. There was a tone he had never heard as yet in the chirping of the crickets, a merry sweetness, most gentle. Was it the starlight? He could not but think of the eyes of his young mother, who had died when he was as yet a child.

THE VIGIL BY THE BRIDGE

THERE, where the Tjikidool, the tawny turbulent river whose hundred springs are in the heart of the hill country, insuperably severs the steep inland from the coast, there stands the Great Bridge. The masonry of the southern base is cemented into the living rock of the hillside which rises sheer out of the ravine, all green and wooded. The northern head stretches far across the broad boggy margin of the great plain, which in the dry season is a marsh and during the rains a foam-flecked flood. Its mighty central pile, broad-based, rock-like in its enduring strength, is planted in the midst of the dragging swirl of the river. Its twofold triad of boldly swung arches lifts its soaring curves above the surrounding densities of billowing tree-tops.

As it stands there, lofty and huge and broad, the one thing lofty and huge and broad in the wide landscape, the bridge may be seen from distances of miles beyond miles. On the long journey to the plain, up hill and down dale, through the twisting passes of the hill country, beyond which the distant southern peaks shine in a diaphanous glory of blue, this twofold row of slender arches, dominating the surging masses of the forest tree-tops, gladdens the eyes of the hill folk at each sudden turn of the path.

Across all the green breadths of the vast plain, an expanse limitless and level as the sea itself, shining beside the sea, many-tinted green beside many-tinted blue, the people of the plain, from their hundred villages darkly nestling among fruit trees and embowering bamboo groves, see the bridge rising against the distant heights. On the ships hastening from north and east and west to the important harbour city on the coast, the sailors point out the bridge to one another as a landmark. It is the link that binds the hill country to the plain, across the dividing gleam of the Tjikidool.

Like all the rivers of this island world, prone under the vertical cataract of the sun's rays, the Tjikidool is a thing of tides, ebbing and flowing with the ebb and flow of that aerial ocean, the rain. In the ebb tide of the rain, the hot season, it is a brook, a wandering coolness, where

the water wagtails drink, tripping from one gravel bank to another. It has many fords. The village folk walk across, the women hardly gathering up their sarongs. The children, slipping out of the bullock-cart as the team stands still to drink, search out the deeper spots to bathe, calling each other jubilantly to the transparent little pools between the boulders, over which, foaming as it falls, the water comes tumbling, flashing in and out of the shadow of the dripping fern that hangs from the stones.

But when the great floods of the west monsoon season come pouring down, the brook suddenly swells into a swirling torrent; from the great falls under the Batoo Helang, the Rock of the Sparrow-Hawks, where, bursting forth with a thunderous roar out of the black mountain gorge, it leaps headlong into the spacious freedom of the plain, it rushes mud-brown and flecked with yellow streaks of foam, down to the great lake of Telaga Sarodja, the Lotus Water, its final quiescence, whence in five tranquil rivers it flows out into the sea.

For the population of the Tjikidool basin there is at these times no way to the plain but the bridge.

From the beginning of one season of change, therefore, to the end of the other, an unbroken stream of traffic passes over the bridge all day and all night, cool night in which the Oriental loves to travel—a river of human beings crossing the river of waves. Continuous, it flows on, with an even murmur of voices, a soft deep rumour resonant with that ever recurrent O which renders sonorous the speech of so many mountain peoples all over the world—an echo of the bubbling, gurgling sound that comes from under waterfalls and out of torrent-shaken ravines. At regular intervals it is broken in upon by the transitory thudding roar, a sound of the daytime only, of the trains running from the harbour city in the north, whitely resplendent against the blue of the sea, to the many recently begun plantations and industrial concerns in the hill country. Down the middle of the bridge the long file of cars thunderously rushes by in a cloud of dust and smoke, which darkens afar off the mirroring river and the reflections of the little low brown houses crouching together on the bank like native bathers chattering in friendly groups. And on either side of the glittering road of rails, undisturbed by the violent haste and heat, the traffic of the coun-

try folk flows evenly on, in long files of pedestrians ever following one another, which, at most, turn aside for a moment when a tinkling bronze bell gives warning of the approach of a bullock-cart, creaking and squeaking slowly along on wheels that are solid disks of tree trunk. Long strings of packhorses, with bulging loads of forest produce, jog past the long strings of people with a rattling clatter of hoofs over the planks, small creatures recognizable sometimes by a slash in the ear as coming from the herds of some chieftain of horse-herds on the wild southeastern islands. As, impatient for the inn on the farther side and a chat with market folk, taking their rest over a meal of rice served up on a shred of banana-leaf and a bowl of steaming leaf-coffee, the driver eggs them on with a hoarse cry from the depth of his parched throat, they break into a trot that makes the long planking of the bridge to rattle from end to end.

Coming in the early morning and returning in the afternoon, multitudes of children pass over the bridge on their way to and from the school which has been opened since the building of the bridge. The shaggy-headed boys, half in and half out of their gay-coloured badju, show each other their tops or, securely imprisoned in a small tube of bamboo, a cricket caught by night with a decoy light set amongst a heap of stones, which they tease with blades of grass to make it fight. The little girls, their hair oiled and combed smoothly, as shiny as a mirror, and a flower stuck into the comical little knot at the back of the head, walk with eyes demurely cast down, carrying their slates and reading-books on the hip, as they see mother do with their baby brother.

Hesitatingly, and avoiding the stream of the young and alert, there move along—not a day passes without many of them coming—those who seek the new hospital, some shading their eyes with their hands from the fierce glare of sky and river around the bridge, others who stumble along and, leaning against the balustrade, pause to rest a bandaged foot; in numbers, too, mothers, each with a pale child asleep in her carrying scarf.

The paths that all this multitude have made, imprinting in the soil with wheels and hoofs and naked feet the record of their desire for the rich plain, come out of all the distances of the landscape south of the great river. Some there are that run along the shore down from the great waterfalls, where the ground is always slightly a-tremble with the

thud of the down-thundering floods and the air is damp and cool even at noon with the rising vapour; the tangled growth of the slopes and the thousands of purple, orange, and light red flower-disks of the lantana which shine out so gaily from amongst the dull rough leaves, are always delicately bedewed. These narrow paths glide sinuous and smooth like little playful snakes through the cool grass. Others come down from the steeps, past sudden juts of rock and precipitous slopes, where the slender young trees stand as if rearing; they dart into sight, grey out of green, and dive down again, like a doe leaping down the hills. Through the yellow-grey alang-alang grass that sucks up the sun's heat and holds it till the wilderness is as a seething pool, the narrow path creeps on like a tiger a-hunting; it is to be guessed at only by an all but imperceptible trembling of the tall white blossom plumes as some traveller passes along, feeling his way with arms upraised to protect his face from the knife-edged leaves. The mountain paths descend, steep and twisting, following the margin of the dark forest from the far-off heights, where, bluish-black with its own vapours, it clings to the mountain-side like some drooping thunder-cloud; along all the ever lessening, ever tenderer-tinted slopes, down to that last one, which, with its wealth of crowding tree-tops and sprouting thousand-hued undergrowth, glides softly down into the river. As deliberately as the heavily laden ponies driven along by the charcoal-burners, these paths proceed. And some there are that come down the hills where the slope is hewn out and banked up into terraced fields; as daintily and carefully as women planting rice they glide along the narrow dykes and over the little glittering falls of the irrigation water.

But the great road from the south coast, which, through the depths of the forest, moves broad and stately toward the bridge, advances like a prince riding at the head of his nobles.

As many and as varied as the ways are the desires that go out toward the bridge. And the bridge rises up to meet them all, broad to receive, strong to bear, like some good-natured giant who, bestriding the stream, his feet planted firmly upon the opposite sides of the foaming ravine, takes up a whole swarm of little people at once on his broad back and gently sets them down again where they wish to be, in the rich plain, which holds their satisfaction and their ever increasing desire.

Therefore, as it dominates the landscape from near and from far, so

The Bridge

the bridge dominates the daily life and daily thought of the mountain people. They have numberless proverbs concerning it; it stands for a symbol of many things. To the bridge they compare faithful friendship, help that forestalls supplicating need, patience that wearies not, however heavy the burden, far-sighted forethought that preserves from accident and adversity. In the pantoon-rhymes which they sing on festive evenings, they play a game of invention and imagination with it. The building of the bridge makes a division in their recollections, a hither and thither in time. "That is a matter of the days before the Bridge," they will say of what is past and gone, of old-time events. Parents tell young people how much sweeter life is now, in the times since the bridge, than it was before; how much happier the sons and daughters are than the fathers and the mothers were in the days of their youth. And they often add, "Blessed be the Builder of the Bridge, and blessed be his ancestors up to Adam the father of us all and Eve the mother of us all!"

In their talk of him the name that he inherited from his father is never heard; it is too harsh to their lips, accustomed to soft liquid sounds; nor do they give him his official title, as is their wont when speaking of those whom they know only as the bearers of the alien authority over them: ever the same the authority, a great and lasting thing; puny and fleeting the man who bears it. For him, as if he were one of themselves, they follow their own ancestral custom, which with the name plainly denotes the person, according to some quality of the body or of the soul; so that a child bears one name, but another name is borne by the grown man or woman, by which they are commended as the strong one, or the wise one, or the heart-rejoicing beauty. So they name him in praise of what he was to them: the Builder of the Bridge; or as often, too, they will say "Our Friend."

Near the northern abutment of the bridge—where the low marshy ground, which becomes a river in every rainy season and remains a morass for many weeks in the season of change, slopes up toward the firm land and the populous high road—there stands an ancient banyan tree, a growth of a hundred stems, of a thousand swaying air roots, a forest in itself; the Builder used to take shelter in its shadow, as day by day he watched the progress of his work. From off the coupled barges that floated the pile-driver the men could see him as they drove in the

piles for the foundation of the central pier. And as, climbing up out of the quaking mud of the sunk shaft that was to form the foundation in the slippery unstable mire of the shore, the diver paused and drew breath, it was the Builder whom, first of all, he saw. From the first the wood-cutters in the mountain forest, and the lime-burners on the slope, and the mandoor of the Decauville railway, which runs down from the heights to the river with its heavily laden trucks, used to point out to each other the glittering white spot underneath the black-green hill of the banyan tree. The Chinaman who secretly bought away the cement out of the mixing troughs never returned after that dark night—it had seemed to him absolutely safe—when a white shape, issuing out of the darkness of the banyan, had moved toward his heavily laden barge.

In the mighty parent-stem of the multitudinous tree, a grey rock to the eye, rent, cloven, and hollowed out into deep cavities, the Builder had carved his name; half in meditative idleness, half perhaps in an earnest that understood the strange ways of thinking of the hill folk. As they appeared to the first who noticed these incomprehensible characters, so they seem to this day, to those who reverently contemplate them, a magic spell, powerful to ward off all evil from the bridge. They believe these tokens to contain the profound knowledge and the virtue of the Builder of the Bridge. They hang jessamine wreaths on the tree, little bags made of plaited strips of banana leaves in which sacrificial rice has been boiled, and ornaments of gilt and coloured paper, to secure a portion of this inexhaustible heritage of good luck. A man undertaking a long journey, a woman on the way to market, is not likely to pass by the banyan without some such offering. There are even tales of more than one mother who took a sick child thither and carried it home restored to health and smiling. Such power there is in the sign of the Builder of the Bridge!

Of him and of the building of the bridge, and of the daring deed by which he saved it from the devastating bandjir, at the time when, shortly before its completion into steadfast strength, it stood still frail, they tell each other tales which flourish like legends and are as melodious as songs. All through the mountain district, these tales wander to evening festivals full of radiance and gamelan music and lightly swaying dances; and pass over the rice-fields where girls with flowers in their hair gather the ears which the youths carry away in heavy sheaves; and

to the bathing place, cool with fresh-smelling water that leaps down in a cloud of spray; and to the shaded spot under the eaves, where the batik-worker sits before her richly colouring fabric, carefully held fast against the slight breeze that rocks the section of bamboo stem suspended above her head, the hive of the almost invisibly small noiseless bees which supply her with wax for her work.

A few only of these songs tell of how with his thought he wrought the wonder, that road that raises itself from the ground where roads lie, and, transparent against the light, passes through the air, over the foaming and swirling depth, a fixity to be trusted in. No such great miracle does this seem to them for the Westerner, whom they know to be a worker of wonders by his great knowledge. Tooan Allah created him thus, even as he created him white, and gave him power over dark-skinned people!

But innumerable and varied as the sun-flickerings on the flowing river are the stories and the songs of the deed which, with his naked body that shone with courage and strength, the Builder did for the salvation of the bridge, when the bandjir, the terrible, came down upon it. It delights them, even as the deeds of the heroes of ancient song. They celebrate it, even as in the long nights the dalang, half singing, half speaking before his lighted puppet show, or the tookang pantoon who hums in the dark to his instrument, celebrates the feats of arms of kings' sons in the heroic age, who, in their battling against Raksasas, monsters with the jaws of devouring beasts, and against fierce giants, were the chosen and ever victorious champions of the gods in their celestial palaces and the favoured of the fragrant and smiling goddesses.

This transfiguration of a compatriot provokes a certain irony in the Westerner, to whom this man does not seem, even for that heroic deed, in any way different from all others—grey with the workaday dust of the tedious labour that Westerners, the dominated of their own domination, have to toil at in the Eastern land; the labour that wrings out of earth, water, air, and fire, out of plant and beast and man of the sun-land, such sustenance for themselves as they shall need in their distant home, the day of return to which is always too far off. With a shrug of the shoulders they say that, thus glorified, no one would recognize the civil engineer who, when the line to the coast was laid, found means to win over the Government to his plan of building a bridge across the

Tjikidool in order to open up the hill-country—a project which, in reality, was made by others long before his time and urged again and again by successive Residents of the province, but which had to be postponed on account of the more stringent necessities of military policy and of punitive expeditions to outlying parts of the colony.

But the natives choose to represent their friend in this wise, in no other or lesser. This transfigured image of him is to them the true one—true according to the truth of the heart, which is to the truth of the senses as the sweet kernel of the grain of rice is to the hard and shining husk. Even as the chaff is blown out of the sieve of a woman winnowing the pounded rice in the wind, all outward seeming and circumstance is blown away out of the winnowing experience of time; but that which was in the heart has become the food of life, even as the rice-grain, and a beginning of things which, perpetually renewed, still endure. Therefore they sing unabashed their songs and rhymes and proverbs about the Builder of the Bridge, and, singing, are happy, and at times feel almost a desire to be such a man as the much-legended one was: strong and kind. Can this be yet, can this be? Terrific as the bandjir are many powers that forbid; but the smiling land of dreams lies open to fancies and longings. The far-away ancestors of this people, who found no living-space for their hearts' desire on the hard and dark and narrow earth, lifted their eyes to the skies; and, the rains and gales of the monsoon season having wrecked their hut, they rebuilt it of stars, so that for all time it shines on high as the Little Slanting House, the constellation which Westerners have named the Southern Cross. And they arose from the weary labour in the rice-field as the eternally unwearied Ploughman, Orion of the Westerners, who, in starry shape and girt with stars, steers a star-built plough that moves of its own strength through azure glebe and pool of cloud. Ever thus, they of the present day who find no living-space in the cold dark hard reality that now oppresses their hearts' desire of dominion over the powers of nature, of the happiness of a life in fraternity, raise to the heaven of poesy their vain longings; and in that glorious one who conquered the whirling flood and built a road for the lonely dwellers in the hill forest toward the people of the spacious plain, they image forth their hoped-for self.

An hour came and a place was found for the meeting together of all these many imaginations, memories, and saws. It was in the night, a night of the season of change, between the months of the sun and the months of the rain; at the bridge. As is their wont, when there is danger of a sudden flood, a bandjir, coming down, the men of the river villages were on guard, to protect the bridge from driftwood. Thus there were many together there who at other times are far apart.

Old Hadji Moosa, who had been the friend of the Builder of the Bridge, was seated in the circle around the leaping flames of the watch-fire; and the village headman of Gandasoli was there, Sootan Arab, who, as a mandoor of the wood-cutters, had helped to build the bridge —a man from the south coast, from a village of pirates. And with the multitude, who paused in passing and sat down by the roadside, attracted out of the chilly darkness by the blaze of the watch-fire and, even more, by a faint tinkling of gamelan music arising by whiles, Soomarti from Kebonan Baroo had come, who was to go to Holland to be a student at a University, but whom his companions still called Moodjaddi, as in the time he herded his father's one buffalo and hid himself amongst the bushes to read the books with which the teacher at the Dutch school always kept him supplied.

There where the glow of the fire faded, but where the darkness which fell from the great banyan and its fringe of air-roots was not yet dense, twixt light and shade, the poet-musician, Si-Bagoos, was seated amongst his musicians and their manifold musical instruments.

And the daughter of the Radhèn Regent was there, Rookmini, of whom it was said that, in her father's stately house, she had refused to accept the homage due to an elder from younger sisters, and wished to be their equal in all things. And now she taught this new way of living to the girls who came to her school, in the great house that her father had given her. Daughters of the native nobility came there, and children from the village huts. She would have them all be as sisters and herself a mother's sister amongst them. She was not seated amongst the market folk by the road, but kept under the banyan where many wreaths of jessamine and champaka gave forth sweet fragrance; by the sign of the Builder of the Bridge she sat, in the midst of an ever growing circle of women and girls; the clipped air-roots of the banyan,

which hung down to within a few feet of the ground, formed a half transparent curtain between them and the men round the fire; dusky and transparent, it hung before the women like rain, seen against the evening glow; to the men it was, in the empurpling firelight, like steep rays of morning red playing over a dark drift of cloud.

As many people, grown men and women, youths and maidens and little children, as at other times can only be found at the passar or at some feast which a nobleman gives to an entire district, were gathered by the bridge and by the dark roadside on that night.

In the clouded heavens the moon drifted like a boat amongst grey billows, overwhelmed at one moment, emerging the next. In the shifting light the steep southern shore of the river, and the bridge, and glimpses of the distant plain with an expanse of sea seemingly sloping up toward the horizon all silvery with moonlight, shone out and again disappeared into darkness. The Tjikidool roared against the abutments of the bridge and around the central pile; the water voices joined in the tale that then was told, and that since has been repeated how often in how many places on how many days and nights!—a strange tale, a tale of great things and of smallest intermingled. The singing of Si-Bagoos was in it, and the teaching of Hadji Moosa, and the plaint of the old men who still remembered the sorrowful days of solitude, and the chattering story of the men who knew about the felling of the wood and the digging of the foundations and the building of the bridge, the thieving and receiving and the secret trafficking in building materials, and the squabbles between hill folk and people of the plains. As full of inventions it was as the sarong which a skilful batikker has painted with dragons, butterflies, and flowers, red, blue, and brown on a yellow ground. As diverse it was as the water of the river which, surging out of the darkness all heavy with drift, mingles in one wave the limpid waters of the mountain lake, cool with the light of the stars, and the refuse from the village ditch. A thing of the season of change was the river that night; a thing of the season of change was also the tale. And the bridge, dimly seen by glimpse of moon and flicker of flame, stood as a watcher over all, the deed perfected protecting the memory of the deed in its growth, and the hope of deeds to be accomplished in the days to come.

THERE had been a cloud-burst in the highlands that night. Now all the mountains rushed with rain; and the great river rose. Out of all its thousand springs on cloudy slopes and in ravines dark with damp wood; out of its mountain meres tranquilly clear, reflecting the sky only and the soaring eagle; out of the bubbling sources on the hillside, the springs, the rills, the brooks, the steep cascades of the ravine that scatter in a flying spray over the tops of the slender-stemmed wood striving up toward the sunshine out of depths of darkness; out of the pools, purple with water-hyacinths; out of the great lake, where the tall-stemmed lotos flowers, white and red, glimmer on the wind, a tremulous radiance seen from afar; out of the dull green marsh, misty with clouds of mosquitoes, hideously astir with the writhing of pale-bellied snakes, breathing fever over the shivering villages; out of the flooded terrace fields of the hill range and the rice-swamps of the plain; out of all its tens of thousands of gathering places, the water was flowing toward the Tjikidool.

It was raining in the highlands, raining. Over the cloud-swathed mountain-tops the air was all rain.

The zenith was a black well-spring, the clouds its waves. Out of it gushed, transparently dark, a fall of jetting streams; out of it in a cataract, standing steep between sky and mountain-top, sprang the Tjikidool. The river of rain beat down upon the glistening mountain-tops, blunting and dimming them as the ripple blunts and dims pebbles in the valley bed. The mountain forest stooped under it, like pliant water-growth under the wave, palely bending and dragging on its roots to follow the impetuous current. The underwood along the brink broke away and shot down the slope, that was changed into a brown cascade. The deep ravine had leapt up, a seething whirl. It tore at its walls; bushes, trees, earth, and rocks tottered and were precipitated into the sounding depth. The waterfalls by the Stone of the Sparrow-Hawks, where the torrent bursts forth from its black mountain gorge and leaps down into the space and splendour of the great plain, came down crashing with the weight of rolling masses of rock and hurtling trees dragged along with root and branch.

In the villages downstream the people sat watchful. More than one thought anxiously of his plantations on the slopes. The coffee had blossomed so profusely! The rice was sprouting so lustily! Alas! the

shrubs, surely, were lying broken and torn under the muddy gravel now; no doubt but the rice-field was floating downstream, glebe and stalk! And the husbandman once more cursed the nomads of the western hills who set the hillside on fire to sow their rice in the ashes—the reckless destroyers of the forest, which holds the slopes together with its twining roots and, catching the rain, gently filters it through its spread of leaves. And all the more angry he grew with the light-hearted young men, who had gone up into the hills as to a feast, a merry hunting party, following the sound of the rumbling landslip. They well knew that the bandjir, the fierce hunter, had slain numberless creatures of the forest, flinging them down hither and thither on foam-covered heaps of boulders, and they would bring away the quarry before the swarms of small beasts of prey came for them, and, in the evening, with his green shining eyes, the tiger.

As the evening red broke dully through a smoky brown of clouds, the river to the east of the Stone of the Sparrow-Hawks began to rise. Sluggish and turgid, the flood rose. In Tanah Abang, the first village downstream from the falls, the watchman stood at the gate, listening; and as he caught the signal for which he was waiting, sounding out above the thundering crash of the cataract, a long, deep, clear note, he seized the wooden hammer and with a swing of his arm struck it against the suspended hollow block. It rang again. Over the village, over the river, over the hills, the bandjir signal resounded, in answer toward the Falls, in warning toward the Lakes. The swinging hollow trunk, the tree-bell, a crier in the native villages, mightily he called, called to the other bells upstream and downstream, called all the villages along the river.

They heard it, one after another. And one after another repeated the tidings and the warning:

"Be on your guard, be on your guard! The river is rising!"

It grew into a chorus. The villages on the hills joined in, and the villages of the plain. There were some calling here, there were others calling there; they called aloud through the darkness. On the river-shore, in the rice-fields, on the slopes and the hilltops, in the valleys, in the forest they called one another to come and watch by the bridge, that the bandjir, the ruining hill of waters and woods, might not, with its

ramming tree-trunks, destroy the piles and the abutments of the bridge.

The villages were calling through the night. The voice of each had a note of its own. The voices of the villages on the river were clear—the water carried them along in perfect purity. But the hamlets in the forest gave forth a muffled sound; the weight of mud-soft leafage heavy with damp lay upon the forest. The voices from the slopes and the heights were tenuous; they glided, tremulous and tense as the flight of the swooping swallow. And those in the narrow valleys mumbled indistinctly. And those of the plain rang out with a spacious sound. A listener with a fine ear might have discerned the lie and shape of the village-bearing land by the notes of these bells as plainly as if he had seen it spread out in the sunshine, so clearly it stood imaged in sound.

At first the bells had called all with the same call, uniformly, in one measure. But after a time there came a change; for each had now a message and an answer of its own to give.

Some called: "The river is rising, rising!" and others: "The river is rising: guard the bridge!" To this all together answered: "We are on our way, are on our way; we are on the way all together." And a few: "We are keeping watch!"

But suddenly—and then all the others were silent—a new voice resounded, the greatest of all, the deepest, in which there was the most of earnest and authority. That was the great bell by the bridge.

It called out over the nocturnal landscape: "Come, come ye all! Sons, come!"

In the dark houses the men rose. The women handed them as they went the kindled torch that was to light their way. On all sides then there began a flickering, and there, where the great bell-voice resounded, a great light shone up. As the sound of the bell was deeper and stronger than all other sounds, so this light was broader and brighter than all other lights. It shone out afar, red and full of scintillations as the red star which, in the constellation of the Ploughman, is the bleeding wound in his foot, stung by a small snake of the sawah. Steadfast it stood among the multitude of wandering lights, the one motionless, as steady as the star. They stood by one another, fraternally, the great bell and the great watch-fire, twin signs of the bridge.

Toward them moved all the little flickerings, the hastily swinging, swaying, waving ones.

As the calling bells revealed the villages, so the paths in the landscape were revealed by the moving lights—all the paths that lead toward the bridge, the upward paths out of the plain, the downward paths from the hills, the paths along the river upstream and downstream, the paths on the edge of the forest. As they glided onward they drew through the darkness the meshes of a net of roads, an immense net which a giant fisherman standing upon the bridge was hauling up out of the waters of the night. Ever more numerous and ever brighter strings and meshes of light he drew up to him, while all the time the great voice at the bridge continued calling: "Come, sons, come!" And still the answering cry came back: "All our men are on the way!" "We are drawing near!" "We are making ready!" The glittering net shrunk together, became a billowing circle of light around the great fire at the bridge, was burnt up in it.

The bells fell silent.

By this the women in the dark villages knew, and told the children, sitting upon the sleeping-mat wide-eyed and restless, that the watch was come together by the bridge. By the great fire far away father was sitting now, and he was watching for them, that the bandjir might do no harm to the bridge that they passed over every day when they went to school.

The men from the four villages that neighbour Gandasoli had the first turn, together with the men from Gandasoli. The village headman, Sootan Arab, who had been a mandoor of the wood-cutters at the building of the bridge, called them by name, each according to his place and duty, to the shores of the river, with hooks and loops to catch the driftwood and make it fast to the trees on the bank; or to the abutments and the centre of the bridge, to fend it off with long poles from the central pile and steer it under the arches so that it might float away to sea.

The tall, lean man, who, by his broad chest and shoulders, might be known for one who had rowed a prao on the sea from childhood, and who had a sea-face too, bold-featured and fierce-eyed, raised his ringing voice. Tones of as searching a resonance are heard on the islands along the coast of New Guinea, where the wild Alfoor folk wind Tri-

New Guinea

ton horns calling one another from island to island, over hills and flickering sounds, with the peals of that magnificent trumpet.

Hadji Moosa, the old man who had been the friend of the Builder of the Bridge, sat close to the fire, his hands clasped round his knees and his wrinkled face raised to the warmth of the flames. It moved and changed strangely in the changing light. So deep in thought the old man sat that he never noticed the pealing voice of command, nor the faces of the multitude around the fire, nor those of the constant procession across the dark bridge; faces which in advancing became distinct for an instant in the radiance, then melted back into darkness while those succeeding them were lit up.

There were many people journeying to the plain, because of the great passar at Djalang Tiga, and of the dedication festival at the new sugar-mill that a Chinaman had built; and especially because of the expected arrival in the harbour of a ship bringing home pilgrims from Mecca. Dark and with a deep muttering like that of the river in the depth, the throng streamed by. And as in the river of waves, so in the river of humanity there were sudden eddies and whirls, when a group of pedestrians halted to ask or to bring tidings of the bandjir, and those advancing paused and those who had gone on turned back to listen. As the steadily rising river here and there scooped out a tiny bay in the shore where the on-hurrying waters eddied for a while and then became even, so the stream of travellers here and there along the side of the road deposited knots of people who prepared themselves to spend the night there. Amongst them there were many young folk who, from afar, had caught a glimpse of brass gamelan instruments on the edge of the flame-lit circle, and had called out to one another that surely the Dalang of Soombertingghi was resting there on his way to the consecration festival in the plains; Si-Bagoos it was, of a certainty! That was a decoy light indeed, that glimmer of waiting music! They came to it as crickets to the lamp of the cricket-catcher, shining out of a heap of stones at night.

Then in the dusk of the banyan, where the musicians were gathered, they became aware of indistinct female shapes. The women who had gone up with flower offerings to the sign of the Builder of the Bridge remained there. That was because of Rookmini, said one to the other.

Timid, but eager, the women approached the Radhèn's daughter

and took courage as, in answer to their murmured salutation, they heard her grave, gentle voice, that was like the deep crooning of the turtle-dove, the bringer of good luck. They seated themselves around Rookmini, in the darkness that fell from the banyan. As around the watch-fire the lighted circle of men grew, so around her the dim circle of women still grew. The fringe of clipped air-roots hung between them, transparently dark, interwoven with shifting gleams of firelight.

So gently as to be imperceptible save by the gradual increase of the fragrance drifting from the flower offerings at the foot of the tree, a waft of cooler air passed by, the first soft breath of night. And, as if borne along on that slight current, together with the scent of the roses and the jessamine, a soft music arose from the gamelan orchestra, so restful in its rhythm that listeners felt its ripple like the flowing of the blood in their veins.

The voice of Si-Bagoos then arose in half-singing speech. As upon placidly flowing water blossoms drift, fluttered down out of overhanging foliage, and a rosebud floats amongst them or a purple oleander flower that has dropped from the hair of a bathing girl, or a handful of jessamine out of the sacrificial basket laid on the wave by the next of kin of a new-born child, so on the gamelan music the words of the poet-musician drifted.

"As the fragrance of the jessamine which women piously bring to Our Friend's resting place, whence he beheld the work of his thought growing, work begun and completed for our sakes, so in our hearts is the fragrance of gratitude toward him. As the gleam of the white champaka flower in the morning sun, when it shines forth from dense leafage, the thought of his deed is in our remembrance. How he built the bridge, a road over the impassable stream, how he saved the bridge, in the bandjir, striving against stream and forest, against the dark powers, even as Ardjoona strove against the Evil Giant—thereof we will sing and tell. Let us do honour, brothers, to the courage that sprang not from desire for power; nay, that had its source in brotherly love."

He ceased. With a slight modulation the gamelan music glided over into another measure. And now it became the melody that sings a welcome to the guests at the beginning of a feast.

In complacent expectation of coming pleasure the multitude waited, the women in the dusk of the banyan, the men in the light of the flames, the throng of market folk in the darkness of the road. Those who a moment ago passed by without looking back, lingered, paused. By the roadside the groups became more numerous.

The melody of welcome ended. Like fireflies in the dark the last clear notes hung for a while in the air, tremblingly afloat; then they soared away into the distance. And after a pause of silence a new melody began, which was slow and solemn; it suited well with the darkness and the deep muttering of the river; it carried well the words of the singer.

"As a traveller who out of the wild and perilous ravine has been led up by a wise guide to a safe place, where pleasant rest and coolness await him, a meal offered by a friendly hand with words of welcome; as from the heights attained the traveller looks back once more, plumbing the depths with his eyes, and with his heart the long wandering, the fatigue and the anxiety; then all the more does he rejoice in his friend's roof, greeting him with a kindly gleam—so will we, living happily in the present day, look back upon former times, the times that were before the building of the bridge; all the more shall we then rejoice in the time that is now.

"Far off are the days and dark as the depth of the ravine; then the Forest King was sovereign over the people of the mountains, the Lord of the Great Solitude. Many were his sons, many his servants, his allies many and most mighty. The spirits served him that steal through the darkness and entice men over the edge of the ravine. Fever is his child, that turns over on mud and rotting leaves as on a sleeping mat. The great proud beasts served him: the tiger with the terrible eyes that flame through the night, the wild bull buffalo, between whose horns rides death, the rhinoceros, the dreaded hunter of those who hunt him, the herd of wild pigs that root up the fruitful plantation, the gliding snake swollen with venom. The mountain was his ally, and the wind that comes from the mountain; the clouds that are the floating springs and rivers of the air. The tall grass of the wilderness, the alang-alang, was his army; ten thousand times ten thousand is their number, whose banners, streaming white on the wind, become new thousands upon thousands, conquerors of all empty places. Food for men grows there no more.

ST. THOMAS COLLEGE
LIBRARY

"How could the people of the mountains strive against the Forest King, the dread prince of spirits and his innumerable hosts? How could they escape from his power by flight? The Tjikidool who was his ally watched at the kraton gate. Impassable was the stream. From afar too he deterred those who would approach from the plain. He terrified the horseman and the horse; the heart of the man was filled with fear, the horse reared white-eyed. He terrified the cart driver and the bullocks before the cart. In vain the driver muttered incantations; like the stone bull which stands in the great temple of Boro Buddhur, the bullocks stood motionless. Of good things none, neither help nor friendship nor joy, did the inexorable river allow to come to the people of the mountains. But for evils and disaster it was a ready road. It carried hunger to them. It carried to the mountains the army of rats when they fled from pursuit in the plain; it carried to them who owned but little the devourers of all; the plague it carried to them, and death."

A movement had passed through the multitude of listeners as the poet-musician began to sing of the year when the great plague of rats came. They looked away from him to where amongst the throng of dark heads a few glimmered white. The very oldest only knew of those far-off days. Would they not speak? For although no one will ever interrupt the dalang when he lends his voice to the gaudy wayang puppets moving before the white screen to tell of the high exploits and adventures of gods and godlike heroes, or the tookang pantoon, who, alone in the dark with his music, chants the long verses of a fairy tale, this was no fairy tale nor legend of strife of gods; it was of events still within the memory of men that Si-Bagoos thus sang to the melancholy music of the gamelan. And it seemed as if Si-Bagoos, too, were waiting for an answering song to his song of the great calamity, for when the words of the coming of the year of horror had died away he sat, as if expectant, in silence, and like the others he had turned his face to where the white heads glimmered amongst the thickly clustered black ones.

As in the wood where bats hang to the branches in their day-sleep, large and heavy and motionless, hardly resembling living creatures, but rather like some misshapen fruit on the leafless tree; as in the wood of the bats the report of a hunter's rifle startles all these sleepers, so that they unfold their filmy wings and sail aloft with a plaintive cry,

and the air is full of darkness and wailing, there where but now all was blue sky and the soft rustling of leaves—so at the singer's words of the year of distress, the memories awoke that slept in ancient hearts, and from those who had sat silent they rose up moaning.

A slow, feeble voice began. "I it was, I, who saw the sign of the disaster; I who was a young boy then. I was helping my father at fishing. In the evening we had set out our net in the river; I went forth before dawn to draw it up. Eh! how heavy it was when I drew it up on to the shore! Such a catch, I thought, we never had yet! I shook out the net on the grass. O children! while I am telling of it I feel my hair stand on end as it did then, when my eyes beheld the horrible sight! no fish, no fish, but a hideous heap of dead rats! Crushed together and hanging on to one another by teeth and claws, they stuck fast in the net, most loathsome to see. I stood as if turned to stone. When the bathers came to the river, they saw the devourers in the net—hunger caught in the stead of food. Oh, what lamenting then arose!"

A second plaintive voice began: "I had a rice-field by the river; I saw it wither. Withered were all the fields upon the slopes, withered the fields around the village; sere upon the ground lay the stalks, sere the unripe ears. The ground moved and swarmed, invisible life stirred in it, life that destroyed life—life that was death."

A woman's voice arose: "Our mothers spoke to us: 'My daughters! the time is near when the village headman sends the messengers to the households with glad tidings, summoning them to come up for the gathering of the harvest; and the girls carefully arrange their smoothly folded raiment, and place a flower in their hair next to the wooden harvesting knife which is their ornament on this day, thinking of the young men who will come to meet them in the field, thinking of feasts and betrothals and happy weddings. The time will come, but not the message. No lovers are waiting amongst the harvest. The rats have devoured your wedding feast, my daughters!' "

And a second spoke: "My husband went to his father, begging for the loan of rice. His father asked: 'How shall he lend who is in want himself?' I went to my mother's brother. My mother's brother spake: 'We have sought for the last grains in the dust of the corners of the rice barn; we have scraped the floor.' Then my husband went into the forest to seek for roots. Ah! what anxious days, how many anxious days, I

waited for him! My little child wailed in my lap; no milk was in my breasts to still its hunger. It wanted to drink; it bit the nipple so that blood came instead of milk. And I wept, but not for the pain in my breasts; I wept for my child's hunger. I wept, but not because of my loneliness—because of the wandering of my husband in the forest it was I wept. Where, I thought, is he, where is my husband now? Perhaps he has fallen into the ravine, and no one hears him moaning. Perhaps a wild boar has attacked him, or the bull buffalo that keeps watch over his herd has rushed upon him as he entered the clearing in the forest. Perhaps the tiger has carried him away, the mother tigress that carried away Djodjo, dragging him out of a circle of men as he was sitting in his own house, in the village that is all surrounded by the alang-alang. I was as a corpse with fear till he came back. Little it was he brought who had searched so long; but little! Ah! my little child, it died!" She ceased on a sob. Tears stole slowly down her wrinkled cheeks.

A voice that was as a sigh rose out of the multitude by the roadside. "Mother-of-Sidin! how many a mother wept then even as thou didst weep, for her beloved child! Oh, how many children died in the hill villages then! Their little bodies were so thin, their little faces were like the faces of old men."

A dull man's voice spoke. "First the little children died and the old people, those who had but little strength as yet and those who had strength no more. Then the men and the women died, those who were full of strength. The mice had eaten up their strength as it stood afield. As the mice devoured the field, so hunger devoured the men and women, eating from within outward. It ate their bowels and their flesh, it ate itself out through their skin. They were nothing but hunger. And then came the sickness!"

He was silent for a long time and then began again: "A great evil the hunger had been! a greater evil was the sickness that came after it. Of no avail was the art of the dookoon; all the lore that he gathered out of magic books was of no avail. Did we not do in all things as he commanded? We offered up all the sacrifices, even those that were the most difficult to accomplish, even the most costly; we performed all the sacred acts, we pronounced all the incantations. We tied bunches of prickly aloe leaves to the posts of the village gate in order that the sick-

ness should fear to enter. Every evening before sundown we set down a bowl of yellow rice and a bowl of water and spoke the words of invitation, that the sickness might eat and drink and, being refreshed, pass on, well disposed toward our village, sparing us. But for all that, it came in! All the houses of our village it entered and slew the father and the mother and the ancient grandparents, all the children, the grown up, and the little ones; only a few remained to bury the dead. Hastily they buried them; they did not wind them in a white winding-sheet, they did not recite the prayers of the dead. With averted faces, fearing that death would come forth from the dead, they threw a handful of earth upon them. In the night the hungry dogs came. They fought by the new-made graves. No one drove them away from the thing which they tore from one another and devoured."

The old and faltering voice spoke in dread. "Not all were dead that the buriers buried. A man came into our village, lean and naked; he staggered in his walk, swaying as a glagah stalk sways in the wind. He made gestures to beg for water, and drank, lying where he had fallen down. Not for many hours did he speak: then he said he had been buried, seeming dead. And he showed the bleeding bites of the dogs in his flesh."

When the voice ceased it was very still. The soft rustling made by the night wind in the dense mass of the hanging banyan foliage became audible; the river was grinding against the abutments and the great pile of the bridge. A cloud that had long obscured the moon drifted away, and the misty light suffused the sky and the landscape; between dark masses of driftwood the river glimmered uncertainly, and on the steep southern slope the wood, crowding upward in billowy masses, stood in a dim silvery shimmer. Under that transparent surface lustre impenetrable darkness lay sunk in clefts and hollows, a cruel mystery.

But the gentle thrumming that all the while had softly continued grew gradually louder and clearer, although it still was very gentle. And now a girl's voice floated out upon it, and another followed; tender and timid were they both.

"The mother weeps on the grave of her beloved child, bringing food offerings on the days consecrated to the memory of the dead; yet she smiles when at her return the other children run to meet her; for the sake of the lost one she loves the living all the more tenderly. The pen-

sive one sighs, remembering the woe of bygone days; yet he rejoices in the gladness of the present day; for the sake of what is lost he prizes what is gained the more dearly."

The soft voices of consolation sank again into silence. And on a lighter melody Si-Bagoos raised his voice anew, celebrating the coming of the builder of roads to the hill country.

"As in the heavens the sun rises over the sea, throwing a golden road to the land, golden over all the waves, thus in the plain arose the Builder of the Bridge, the builder of many roads, the man strong in the strength of knowledge, born in a land across the sea; a shining road he made to the mountains, shining across all the fields. From the sea unto the Tjikidool a road of white beams shone out before his feet. No terror had the river for him! As the heavenly hero looked upon the giant, so he looked upon the Tjikidool, with the look of the conqueror."

A call to battle rang out in the music that bore this song; gallantly it echoed through the night. Every face was raised. Sootan Arab, he of the storm-bird countenance, sat breathing deeply. Presently he joined in the song, humming, with a sound as of a gong that is covered up by a subduing hand. Hadji Moosa looked up out of a long reverie. There was great beauty in his thin, still face as he lifted it out of the glow of the flames; a tender pride lit up its sadness as the cheerful gleam of the fire lit up the dead leaves, dry and brittle, that dully strewed the ground. His voice trembled with the joy of love as he began to sing the praises of his friend.

"As the rising sun is full of comfort and the dispenser of joy, causing the buds to bloom on bushes chilled by the dews of night, causing hearts to rejoice within sad ones, dimmed by the tears of the night, even thus Our Friend was a comforter and generous in the dispensing of joy. Being strong in the strength of knowledge, he gave of his strength to the weak, the ignorant. The building of a road over the Tjikidool, the impassable stream, a road for the people of the mountains, a fixity well to be trusted, this was the thing in his heart; no other. Not the winning of honour, nor the winning of power, nor the winning of riches. No overlord would he be, who was the strongest of all, but a helper of the weak. Well do I know—I, whom he called friend. Difference of white skin and dark skin, difference between the race that rules and the race that obeys, were as nothing to him.

"When he saw that a humble man took thought and could not understand, he would say: 'Come to me in my own house, in the evening, when the work of the day is done; I will make it plain to thee.' Where the railway runs through the sugar-cane fields of Kalimas, there stood his dwelling. Many knew the way thereto! Sitting in the darkness, I looked forth toward his window; the light shone out; I knew, now my friend is waiting for me! I went as if the light were a hand that held my hand. He sat in the midst of many books. On the walls of the room were maps; thereon the land was drawn and the river, not as they are seen by the eye, but according to their true shape, which is discerned only by thought. Of what nature is the soil of the plain and the stone of the mountain, of what nature is the motion and the strength of the water, what are the places from which the water flows, all this was to be seen on these maps. And Our Friend explained it to us so that all of us understood, and understood too why it was that he who would build a bridge over the Tjikidool must know all these things. For even then that was his desire; he, Our Friend, wished it before yet any one else wished it. While no one thought of us, he thought of us—he of the gentle heart, the truly kind one!

"From the window of his room, that was to the south, he looked upon the river, upon the place where the ford was in the dry season; in the time of change how often the people sat there waiting! waiting all night if haply the river would have fallen so far in the morning that, wading in up to the lips, a man might venture to cross. But often the river fell not—nay, it rose—and fell not the following day either, and those who had waited long in vain threw down their burden in anger and despair and returned home, poorer than when they started, and their feet became heavy as they thought of their children who would run to meet them, and of their wife, and of her eyes when she should look at the shoulders lacking a load and at the girdle lacking money. Ah! how many watch-fires burned in vain by the river in those days! He saw them when he looked up from his work. He well knew those fires were not the fires of a man from Hootan Roosa, or a man from Soombertingghi, or from Bookit Berdoori; no, all the people of the mountains it was, that sat there waiting on the bank of the impassable river. For a long while he would gaze in silence. The fires of the waiting ones in the night, they burned into his heart."

The voice of the old man broke. For a while only the sound of the river was heard, growing ever louder as the current scoured with ever increasing violence against the great pile of the bridge. Some one threw an armful of twigs upon the fire; a tall flame leapt up, illumining a circle of grave faces, all turned toward the Hadji. Out of the semi-darkness of the throng by the roadside Soomarti's eyes shone; they were bent on Hadji Moosa as the eyes of a starving man are bent on food.

The friend of the Builder of the Bridge began anew: "I had told him I was a man from the mountains; he asked me how we lived there. But seldom, verily, will a man of this country give true answer to a Hollander asking him. Will not the humble one think that the mighty one asks in order to become the mightier by knowledge, and still humbler and poorer will he himself become thereby? Therefore he says not the things that are, but he seeks for words that will hide the truth under an appearance pleasing to the mighty one. But him, Our Friend, I knew to be our true friend; his question was a brother's question asking his brother that he may help him. As a brother's answer, therefore, was my answer, upright, truthful. I showed him the joy of our life and the sorrow. We spake, he and I, from heart to heart.

"Woe is me! How poor am I become who was so rich then! Never more shall I sit with my friend, the truly good, the kind of heart, whose laugh was as the sunshine! I am old. He is far from here. I have given up waiting—I, who am an old man."

His white head sank down; he sat all drooping. The glow had left his face; it was dim and hollow in the light of the flames. Tears that had been slow in coming and that were now no longer to be restrained, trickled down his wrinkled face.

Si-Bagoos turned and lightly touched the gamelan instrument; it sounded softly. And out of the dusk of the banyan there came a soft singing. "When the fragrant akar-wangi plant dies its root is still fragrant; we lay it among silken garments; all the garments grow fragrant. When days of joy are past, the remembrance is still joy. We treasure it in our thoughts; all our thoughts turn to thoughts of joy." The voice that sang the words of resignation was so young, never from the same heart could the voice and the words come; but it sounded sweetly, nevertheless.

And full of the consolation of sweet music was the melody which, out of Si-Bagoos' fingers that had so lightly touched the bronze, the gamelan player now took over and continued to a gliding, tripping rhythm. Hadji Moosa had raised his head again; he sat still, looking into the flames as if he were gazing at a fair vision. The flame was before him as a purple veil lightly wafted aside from the entrance of a temple; in the contemplation of the innermost shrine the self-forgetting gaze loses itself. He saw not how many eyes were bent upon him—neither Soomarti's face nor Rookmini's, as she gazed at him from under the banyan.

"One thing was in the heart of Our Friend, one single thing. Even as the flame of this watch-fire outshines the torches of the watchers, even as it consumes the wood thrown upon it, the green with the dry; so this one desire outshone all other desires, so this one thought consumed every other thought in his heart: to build roads through the wilderness, that neither jungle nor mountain nor deep ravine nor river in bandjir should any longer part men from men, that there should be no more loneliness and desolation anywhere, but everywhere community and brotherhood. He showed us of what nature is the work of building bridges; how noble a work! And it has been honoured as noble by the wise from the farthest times.

"This it was that Our Friend told us; I repeat his words, of which I have not forgotten one:

"In the times as far off as the times when the Prince of the Wise lived, King Solomon, the lands across the sea, where now the great cities are and the palaces of mighty rulers, were wilderness and forest and marsh. And men lived there as in the wilderness of this our own land men live, and even more unhappily still, because over there but little fruitfulness is in the earth and but little sunshine in the sky. The world is poor there! There are many dark months in the year there, when all plants die; and in those ancient times many men and women also died: of cold they died, and of hunger, and in the struggle with strong and cruel wild beasts.

"One people, however, there was, which lived in a different way. Earlier than all the others this people had gained knowledge concerning the earth and trees and plants and beasts, so that it ploughed and sowed and won plenteous fruit, and dwelt in well-built houses and wore

garments cool in the sunny months and warm in the dark time. This people did not wander, nor did it stray in the wilderness, but it built cities to dwell in, and from city to city there ran a straight road, and over every broad river there was a bridge, so that each town received what it needed from other towns that had it; and not only was it market ware that they carried and exchanged, passing along their roads and over the great bridges that made a road where first a swirling river had been—nay, but knowledge also. Thus ever greater became their knowledge; and they, being grown strong by knowledge, became the mightiest in the world, and rulers over all other peoples. In the conquered lands, where men still lived as the beasts live, they then did as they had done in their own land: they built roads and bridges, that are standing to this day, at this hour while we are speaking of them. The armies of this mighty people which held all the other peoples in bondage passed over the roads and bridges; but with them went knowledge. The armies could not prevent that! Those who were strong by knowledge could not hinder the weak, who were weak through want of knowledge, from gaining the knowledge that they themselves had brought with them over their roads and great bridges. The weak ones grew strong by it! They grew so strong that they drove out the alien rulers, and again became masters of their own land. Now they lived once more according to their own will. But this was no longer as it had been before the strangers came, the builders of bridges, for knowledge had wrought a change in them. After a long time they themselves became conquerors of peoples and lands, and in the conquered lands they built roads and bridges, over which their mighty armies passed to keep those peoples in bondage. But again with them went knowledge! Knowledge went over roads and bridges to peoples where as yet no knowledge was. Where formerly the forest had been their lord, and the strong beasts, the tiger, the wild buffalo, and the rhinoceros, the herds of wild swine, where the alang-alang had been their lord and the impassable river, there came knowledge, by which man himself grows to be the lord!

"And now in all those lands men are changing. They wish no longer to live as their forefathers lived, in dread of the many things stronger than man, for now they themselves are becoming the strongest! How it is they wish to live—that they do not as yet well know. The conquerors, who built the ways for knowledge, do not live happily in their own

lands. These people will not live as the conquerors live. How then? How then? They will know when they shall have gained yet more knowledge; when yet more men can come together, each giving the knowledge that he has gained in exchange for other knowledge that others have gained. Therefore they must make roads through the wilderness; that men may come to men, therefore they must build a bridge over the impassable river, that knowledge may pass over it, and men at last learn how they may live in true happiness, all together as brothers live."

An exultant note had come into the old Hadji's voice, his face shone, it was young with joy and hope. And from all sides other faces shone toward his, most of these very young, half shy as yet, with a smile that was only in the eyes, a light as yet but dubiously dawning. It had grown very still, with a stillness that was not disturbed by the sound of the rushing river. The hill forest showed misty in the pale moonbeams; the clouds, downily grey, lay like brooding wings soft and motionless on the air; the sprouting of all the new life which the rain had begotten could be felt as a hidden sweetness in the breathing warmth.

The dalang, who had taken the swathed hammers out of the gamelan player's hands, gently touched the bronze. And a melody began such as no one had ever heard as yet. The listeners thought, wondering: "What is this melody that Si-Bagoos is playing? How beautiful! How most beautiful!" A strong, calm rhythm was in the music, as of a great multitude marching together in happy concord. Many voices were in it of men and women—voices as of such as are seeking and calling, and voices as of such as have found and answer; a singing of youths and maidens, frolicsome between children's play and men's work; the laughter of many little ones and the call of watchful mothers. But words there were none to this music.

Soomarti, who out of the darkness had come ever closer to the music and the light of the fire, murmured, speaking to himself: "How then must we live? How then?" He did not think that any one heard; the words rose to his lips of their own will. But the dalang understood, and looked at him across the music, and shook his head gravely. Every one who saw discerned his meaning: "The words that say this, the words for this music, are not as yet."

The elders sat pensive, but the young had shining faces; they were all a-throb, as, in the foliage overhead, the young birds which the dawn-like light of the watch-fire had waked. They sat on the edge of the nest looking into the glow, the tiny creatures; they were full of light, and their short downy wings were set quivering with a desire to fly; even thus, stirred with a great longing, these boys and girls sat tremulous. From where she was seated amongst the women, whispering in the protective darkness of the banyan, Rookmini watched them, smiling, happy.

Then the music ceased its song, and became low and subdued, waiting for a voice which it might carry; Hadji Moosa began again:

"Many are the rhymes sung of the bridge, many and beautiful! But one rhyme has not yet sounded. Ah! Would it were made to-night! Would that pantoon-singers in couplets of rhymes that answer one another sang the song of the Beginning of the Bridge! Listen, grandchildren! Hear what the beginning was!

"The command came from the Great Lord in Buitenzorg: Let a bridge be built over the Tjikidool! And the Radhèn Regents and the Wedanas and the Headmen and all those who are in authority gave orders to the people, saying: 'Go ye and build!' But this was not the beginning of the Bridge.

"Wise men examined the nature of the river; they made an image of it, a true likeness. Travelling through the mountain districts, they investigated and enquired of many men, they discovered the sources, they measured the rain, they tried the soil; but this was not the beginning of the Bridge, not this either.

"Our Friend saw how we lived. He saw the fires of the watchers in the night. His heart grew hot within him because of our need. This was the beginning of the Bridge!"

For a time there was silence after he had finished speaking. Then there came a voice out of the shadow of the banyan—not the young light one that had sung first; much fuller this one sounded, and at the same time softer. It sang words new-found, words just unfolding, like the sedap-malem flower, that unfolds in the night. The subdued melody which the musician played well suited the grave and gentle voice.

"In secret is the beginning of the rice plant, in the dark grain, secret. In secret is the beginning of the bird, within the dark egg, secret."

And, answering, a voice came out of the darkling multitude by the roadside; a youth's ringing voice it was: "In secret is the beginning of man, within the dark mother, secret. In secret is the beginning of the deed, within the dark heart, secret."

The scale of sounds ascended in well-defined intervals, harmoniously: first Hadji Moosa's deep voice; then Rookmini's softly clear voice; then the youth's ringing voice. It had to come, that voice; it could not but come! The listeners were well pleased to hear that last high note.

But yet when they saw who it was that sang, they said, in some surprise: "Eh! it is Soomarti! It is Moodjaddi from Kebonan Baroo who sings in answer to Rookmini! Bold is he indeed that he should dare to speak—a boy amongst so many older persons!"

A sound of voices approached, and the light of torches. The watchers whose turn was over sat down again by the fire. They said that the river still rose and a great deal of wood still came floating down, but it was only shrubs and saplings, slight-rooted growth, of small hold upon the soil—no longer tall trees such as there came last year; nothing that threatened danger to the bridge.

The watchers whose turn now began rose to go to the river banks and to the middle of the bridge. And a tall man, to whom one of those returned from the river had handed his torch, turned in going and stood for a moment, shining, as he said that verily the day was a day of good luck, upon which the Builder of the Bridge had begun the planting of a wood on Goonoong Hitam. A good defence it proved from the violence of the rain upon the slopes! No more rice-fields would be destroyed of the many that had been planted since at the foot, and no more houses would be washed down the slopes as had happened so often before. He went: the flame and the smoke of his torch were as a banner over his head.

THE gamelan music began again; merry was the melody. It sounded like an answer, a joyous "ay," a calm glad assurance concerning many happy things.

Sootan Arab raised his kindling eagle-face; that sonorous voice of his, that was like a call from a Triton horn, broke through the soft music.

"A captain for courageous men was the Builder of the Bridge, a leader whom it was good to follow! My comrades and I, men of the south coast, who never follow any man, we followed him, and never rued it. He was like to no other, Hollander or Malay.

"When we came back from our last expedition, then it was that we heard of him. Brothers, what a loss it was, that last journey to Timor for horses!—too unbearable altogether a loss. Four of the horses fell overboard in the fight with the Arab horse-dealer and his men. And we were hardly under sail with the others, when we saw the smoke of a revenue cutter. Even if the wind is favourable, how shall a man escape with sails and oars from a fire-ship? I said: 'Brothers, better to be safe with a few horses than to be caught with many!' Six horses we took into our prao; the prao of the Arab, with the others, we cast adrift. We also thought, perhaps the Hollanders will pursue the horse prao, and while they are busy with the horses we shall escape. There was a favourable wind, we rowed with all our might, we were close to the cliffs. Brothers, a little only, a little was wanting, and we should be safe. Then the revenue cutter overtook us! How shall a man escape from a fire-ship if he have only oars and a sail?

"A bullet struck the water in front of our prao. We leapt overboard. They did not find us on the islands, however long they searched. We had reached the mainland, when we still saw their steam-launch darting hither and thither amongst the reefs.

"And we saw our horses on the cutter's deck, all of them! All! Both those we had left in the Arab's prao and those that we had kept with us to the last—all the twenty of them! Ah! the loss, the all too unbearable loss! All in vain, all the trouble and the fighting and the rowing; all for nothing! A fool was the dookoon who offered up the sacrifice before we sailed. We said to one another: 'Is this a life worth living, brothers? Better were it verily to be a coolie, a man who works with his hands, and does as he is bidden, a slave!' We heard of the building of the bridge, we saw the village of the coolies by the river, a big village, a very big village! The smoke of the noon fires was as a cloud in the sunshine. We had seen it at first on the skirt of the plain, not far from the

The Isle of Pirates

trading city on the coast. Then we had seen it in the midst of the plain, amongst the cane-fields and the sugar-mills. Now we saw it by the river: a travelling village, a village like a bullock-cart that goes where the driver drives it! And the iron road shone behind it; the fire cars were riding along it. We entered the village; it was full of food! No one gave us any. The people said: 'Work! We also work.' We were terribly hungry; we thought, 'It is even so!' We said, 'We will work!' The mandoor accepted us, for some of the workmen, wood-cutters, had just run away, so that they were in need of men. The Builder of the Bridge came and looked at us; he said, 'It is well!' And we looked at him, and to one another we also said, 'It is well!' He was a captain for men like us; that we knew, seeing him. Koowat and Si-Badil and I, we went into the hills to fell wood. That was work for men. The others had run away out of fear. They were afraid of the people of Bookit Berdoori, who had hit the mandoor over the head with a hatchet, after they had long been lying in wait for him."

From the multitude by the roadside there came a feeble hoarse voice, like the crackling of dry leaves that break under foot.

"Builders of bridges have need of a human head to lay under the masonry, so as to make the bridge strong to withstand the river and strong to bear burdens. The enmity against the mandoor of the wood-cutters was because of this. Mothers dared not let their child outside the village gate; nay, they would not let it out of their sight, as long as the builders of the bridge were in the hills.

"And because of the sacred tree was the enmity; because of the Rasamala on the burial ground of Hootan Roosah. The wood-cutters, men without shame, men from another district, had felled trees there. No one from our district would have damaged the forest of the Rasamala. Every grown man—ay, every child—knew what great misfortune that would bring on the people. And even they who were strangers might have known. Easy it was to see that the Rasamala was not a tree as other trees are—that it was the abode of a spirit. A mountain on the top of a mountain it stood; it was as a forest in the midst of the forest. Its base was as a rock. Five men holding each other by the hand could not encompass the trunk. The first bough was a hundred feet above the ground, and the crown a hundred feet above the first bough. The sea-

eagle that came flying from the south coast alighted upon it; thence he surveyed all the land down to where the surf is white upon the northern beach. Even the men of the south coast, who gather swallows' nests from the steep of the rocks, durst not have climbed into the Rasamala for the bees' nests hanging in it. They well knew that death would have seized them before they could seize the honey!"

A second voice fell in, which also had the woodland ring. "It is said in Goonoong Hitam that there was a big village there once, before the Year of the Rats. Kasiman from Goonoong Hitam came to the wood of the Rasamala once, having lost his way. It was just after the great bandjir and the landslip which had filled up the ravine at the foot of the hill. Great clefts were in the slopes; many trees lay uprooted in the wood of the Rasamala. And in a cleft between the torn-up roots Kasiman saw something white. He thought, 'Whatever may that white thing be, that white thing down there in the black earth?' He went, treading cautiously, to the edge of the chasm. Then he saw skeletons—many skeletons, as in the burial ground of a big village. Some lay prone with knees drawn up, and some on the side, all twisted. The roots of the trees had grown through them; a black wicker-work twisted among the white ribs. Then Kasiman knew that it was here that so many burials had been in the year of the great sickness, and those who had been buried alive had not been able to escape, being very weak and struggling against earth too heavy upon them."

The hoarse feeble voice began again: "A forest of spirits was the wood of the Rasamala. Misfortune must come of it, if trees were felled there—great misfortune to all the hill country!" The anxious tones ended in a cry like the croak of the raven.

And suddenly there was an echo on all sides. The night was pierced with the outcry of angry frightened voices, sharp as the sharp grass of the wilderness, that wounds the wanderer's breast and face and upraised hands and pierces the soles of his feet with its splintery broken stalks. Names of evil spirits were muttered. An angry voice cried: "A great misfortune came to the bridge because of this! The fever came of which so many died, and the cracks in the masonry of the sunk shafts, and the washing away of the foundations after the auxiliary bridge was put up. Eh! and did not the Rasamala himself come in the bandjir, driving against the bridge?"

A woman's voice screamed shrilly: "The women of Goonoong Hitam did well to guard their children from the mandoor of the bridge-builders, a lurker in hidden places, a man-hunter! But the spirits took for themselves the sacrifice which the builders would not offer up to them! When the men blew up the rock for the foundation of the bridge on the southern bank, a fragment of rock, flying through the air, tore off the mandoor's head. Then only did the building of the bridge prosper."

All around, the people in the dark muttered. The tenderness and the joy and the strength that a moment ago had found happy utterance were no more; all was confusion and fear and hate. As on the ever rising river the uprooted and torn growth of the mountains, so upon a suddenly released and ever rising flood of dim feeling there floated strange tangles of thought come from afar, shapeless, horrible. The ancestral terror of the forest, the black solitude, gripped anew those but newly escaped from it, who within its awful shadow crouched timorously around the scanty brightness of the watch-fire, an uncertain glimmer, humble and small at the foot of the heaven-hiding hill of darkness, the formidable river rushing by. Wretchedly insignificant, that small knot of human beings cowered, their limbs so frail, their bodies half naked, their eyes but faintly alight with the dawning gleam of the latest and as yet least of all the energies of nature—conscious thought, the examiner of the seen and the unseen. Was it not abject fear, rather than the flickering of the flames, that twisted their faces so strangely, and put sudden gleams into the whites of their eyes? Mumbling mouths opened darkly and showed broken and blackened teeth; an ancient fear it was that had broken and blackened them, fear of the dead, the spirits, the disembodied, who grudge the living that one joy in the world, the warm life of the body, and who lie in wait to destroy it, and must be exorcised and appeased by incantations and by the sacrifice of a small part of that envied body, and must be deceived by rendering invisible what of the sacrifice remains to the sacrificer. And out of the dark mutilated mouths came dark words, expressions of mutilated thoughts, of fear, envy, distrust, cruelty, hate. The ancient monsters of the forest hideously haunted the spot. They still bore the ancient names which had called them into separate existence out of shapelessness, marking them for beings supple and grinning as apes,

with chill clutching fingers; or beings with eyes fierily green like the crouching tiger's eyes, and jaws horribly fanged and dripping with blood; or beings like scaly snakes, swift, subtle, and poisonous, from whose coiling embrace there is no escape.

From the dim hill forest an owlet's subdued chuckle sounded. A quivering voice cried that it was the Pontianak, the laughing one with long tresses, whose embrace is death. And then the women began to wail in fear of the loathly monster, terror of mothers, the floating human head with dripping bowels for locks, that comes to devour the new-born babe. And some one whispered of Njai Loro Kidool, who dwells on the steep south coast in a palace built of human skulls, and whose power extends from one sea to the other.

None gave ear to Hadji Moosa's exhortations and rebukes. And some one cried jeeringly through the ever increasing terror of the muttering and murmuring multitude, that if the Builder of the Bridge did not fear the spirits, it was because he possessed a magic dagger, a weapon that insured victory without strife; stronger than the King of Forest Spirits himself was the incantation that had been pronounced over it and the virtue of the pamor ornamentation on the blade.

Out of the darkness under the banyan the soft deep voice of Rookmini came, beseeching. "Brothers! Brothers!" As a dove breaks through thorny bushes it broke through the mutterings of fear and hate. "Brothers! Did not the Builder of the Bridge teach us how to overcome the evils that threaten us? Does not the bridge stand firm? Is it not, to this very day, a way for happiness, whilst the river in the days before the Bridge was a way for misfortune only? Ah! wherefore will ye speak of the evil ones? Harm enough, verily, has the fear of them wrought us! They have no more power over us who are escaped from the forest, who have a way across the river, who live amongst the many. Over those who dwell together in brotherhood, well we know the Spirits of the Forest no longer have power."

That word of happiness, "brothers," had exorcised fear and anger. Frowning brows grew smooth. But a new disturbance broke out. A man from the plain cried scornfully: "It was not the anger of the Spirits of the Rasamala Forest that caused the cracking of the masonry of the sunk shaft! What caused it was the deceit of the mandoor of the cement workers! Instead of cement, he had sand thrown into the

mixing trough. His belt grew heavy with the Chinaman's silver coins, but the masonry cracked!" Derisive laughter arose.

Another voice from the plain cried: "Mighty are the Spirits of the Forest, who in their wrath wrecked the dam of the pile island, so that the river washed away the piles. But go and ask those who drove in the piles! No one from the hill villages ever guessed that they only drove them in lightly and sawed off the tops, that it might seem as if the piles had been driven in up to the head!"

And the loud laughter grew louder, while a man from the hills threw an angry word at the scoffer, and a man from the coast felt for his dagger. On every side angry voices sprang up and met clashing—voices from the hills, voices from the plain, voices from the coast, voices from the island, fighting over again the ancient endless fight between the folk of the coast and the folk of the inland. For the men of the coast, seafarers, traders, pirates, a bold breed that scours the roads of the sea and ever finds new things, holds in utter contempt the inland people, peaceable tillers of the soil, rooted in their own ground like the growth of their fields, and in all things averse to change. The bold men despise the gentle ones for their gentleness. And they who dare not revenge the insult rancorously resent the taunt that coast-men delight in: "Hill people, men like wild buffaloes, clumsy and stupid!"

The hill people began to boast of the work that their men had done for the bridge, the men of the coast praised theirs; they all shouted together, the wood-cutters, the chalk-burners, the stone-hewers from the hills, the workers in the red clay by the river who had baked the bricks for the masonry, and those who had sawed and grooved and shaped the planks for the dam within which the pile island was built, and those who had dredged the sand out of the river bed, and poured it inside the dam, so as to make firm ground for the sunk shaft that was to bear the central pile. They shouted each at the others and outshouted one another, men from the hills and men from the coast, from the north coast and from the south coast. The boasting ran to scorn and abuse; it was a tangle of cries, as angry as the tearing and rushing of the river under the bridge; and Hadji Moosa raised his hands in vain, while the gamelan player made his bronze gongs resound louder and louder, that music might drown the discordant clamour.

It seemed impossible, at first. And Sootan Arab sprang up, and

would have commanded silence, his eyes threatening, his hand on his dagger. But the music grew louder and fuller and sweeter yet, whilst the deeply resonant drum boomed through it, a commanding rhythm from which there was no escape. And now the liquid notes of the gamelan, the graduated set of bell-like bamboo tubes, sweetest of all gamelan instruments, flowed forth and most willingly followed, suiting their wavelike gliding and tripping to that majestic motion. And the concord of multitudinous music with its stream of melody overflowed all hearts until angry whirls of misunderstanding and self-will subsided, and joy in common was felt because of the work wrought in common. When Sootan Arab cried out that all had done well, and the Builder of the Bridge had been well pleased with the work of each and all, every man was content; although, to be sure, the men of the coast thought: "He is a man of the coast, one of our own folk!" and the hill men thought: "He is the Headman of Gandasoli, one of our own folk!" So they answered as with one voice: "It is most true!"

Then the whilom pirate began the praise of the Builder of the Bridge.

"A captain in truth he was. A liberal praiser, a just assigner of rewards, a discoverer of the guilty, a fearless chastiser.

"He discovered the deceit concerning the cement, and the deceit concerning the piles, and how the foreman who lived like a Hollander in a stone house, although he has a black face like the rest of us, stole the teak wood for the planking of the bridge, and how he falsified the pay-list and paid out wages to villagers who never had done any work, but on pay-days squatted by his house, amongst the workmen, and at night brought the money back to the foreman, keeping a little for themselves as a reward; all this he discovered and punished. His hands were many! And he feared nothing! I myself warned him that the foreman lay in wait for him in the dark to kill him. He laughed. He would not carry a weapon for his defence. He went where he would, even by night. He was a courageous man, a fit captain for men of courage!"

He ceased, his eagle face all alight.

But a soft and diffident voice began timidly: "Courageous of a truth he was, and, toward evil-doers, severe; but with the timid Our Friend was patient, and most generous to those in need. He did not deny us the sacrifice to the spirits when we found courage to ask him. You your-

self, Grandfather Hadji, consecrated the sacrificial meal that he ordered to be spread. The horn-tips of the bullock that he gave us were as far apart as a man's hands when he stretches out both arms!"

The priest answered:

"I consecrated the meal by the bridge, I pronounced the prayers. And he, Our Friend, said: 'Friend Hadji! What is it that thou consecratest? Is it the bridge? think well!' He smiled, and I knew his thought, so that I said: 'Seemingly a bridge, but in truth a new life for the people of the hills!' And he said: 'May it prosper, friend Hadji!' "

A chorus of voices answered out of the darkness: "May it prosper!"

The poet-musician took the lead again. "From the trees of the mountain forest, from the bowels of the steep, from the rocks, from the morass that shifts and glides, from the sand in the windings of the river, the builder fashioned the foundations of the bridge. He made the land into a road across the water."

And to the beat of the music which continued when he had ceased, the builders at the bridge fell in, and the children of those who had been builders at the bridge, one looking toward another, so as to commemorate in concert, as once in concert they had wrought, the work. Each allowed the other his turn, waited, fell in, passed on the song; so that, though lesser in sound and slighter, yet almost more beautiful, there now began a chiming of voices around the watch-fire by the bridge as in the beginning of the night there had been a chiming of bells along the rising river, upstream and downstream. Even as the bells, the men called out, each for his own village, for what his father or his kinsman or his fellow villagers had done toward the building of the bridge; so that, even as the bells had imaged the invisible landscape, so the voices imaged the past event, and the building of the bridge was made a thing of the present hour.

The darkling multitude and the women under the banyan heard. How of the slender trees felled in the hill forest, damar laoot, rasamala, marbaw, merantee, the auxiliary bridge was built, high-piled and wide, along which the erection crane and the trucks of the Decauville railway carried loads too unwieldy for human strength, whilst the workmen swarmed upon it like ants, in apparent confusion and hidden order; how the excavations were begun for the northern abutment, and how in the ever changing soil, in the hot season hard, dry, and cracked

as the potter's dishes in too fierce a fire, but a deep marsh in the beginning of the season of rains, and then a lake, and then a deep marsh again—how a stable firmness was made there with two sunk shafts, two hollow columns of masonry, that with sharply tapering base bored down into the mud, and whilst the mud gulped upward into the shafts, they sank ever deeper into it, being driven down by their own weight, which ever increased as the circular walls grew ever higher under the mason's hands—this they now heard from wood-cutters and ground workers and masons.

They heard of the diver who descended into the sunk shaft to search for the hidden obstacle that prevented it from sinking down straight; and they cried out at the description of him in his diving-dress—he was like the figure of a bootah, an evil giant, at a Chinese funeral, or in the wayang-orang representation of the Rape of Queen Sita, black all over, having a huge head and goggle eyes that had no look in them, and hands like horrible claws; and he stayed down in the depth for so long a time that it seemed he had the nature of the river-crab that lives in the mud under the overhanging bank and moves and has its being in dark and wet places. But he came up again out of the well, and the women ran away shrieking as the hideous head appeared over the wall, together with the tree-stump dripping with black slime that the monster had rooted up out of the depth.

They heard of the engines—"iron buffaloes and iron elephants with a heart of fire they were!" cried the narrator—that had driven in piles, sucked up water and mud, plunged down cement, carried over burdens, raised up loads more tremendous than ever were dreamt of by the maker of the spell of The Thousand Buffaloes, the incantation that moves immovable weights.

They heard of the fever that arose poisonous out of the upturned soil, a shivering of heat and cold, a burning in the bones, a corruption in the blood.

And they heard of the time of suspense, when upon the wooden auxiliary bridge, built over the completed foundations, and the abutments with their mighty corner-stones and the central pile broad-based in the middle of the stream, the men of the field smithy were ready to begin the riveting together, piece by piece, of the ironwork that was to become the permanent bridge; how the Builder of the Bridge, waiting

for the clear weather of the dry season, would stand looking toward the west, toward the bay of sky between two converging slopes, against which, tall and solitary, the gigantic Rasamala tree towered. "More numerous than the bees swarming around the blackness of the tree, Our Friend's thoughts were then around the Rasamala!" said Hadji Moosa. The mandoor of the builders explained to them how, even as the child that will be a strong man when grown up, is frail within the frail mother's womb and easy to hurt, together with her who is easy to hurt, so the iron bridge, strong as it was to be, yet was but frail as long as, whilst it was a-building, it was supported on the wooden auxiliary bridge, and must be wrecked at the same time with it if the sudden rising of the river and the shock of the driftwood should break down its wooden piles. And a man who had worked in the field smithy cried out how, when at last that final work of the riveting began, the smiths had made haste, in order that the moment of peril to the bridge might be as short as possible. In still widening circles, narrated by an ever growing multitude of voices, the choric story spread around the beginner, the poet-musician; and so vivid and actual did the tale of the distant events become to the listeners that, as in a thing of that hour and that place, they began to take part in it, and for all they had sat so silent at first under the canopying and curtaining darknesses of the banyan, the women presently joined in the half-saying, half-chanting of the story.

As the men told of their deeds, so the women told of their waiting and their rejoicing. Shyly and very softly they sang at first, hesitating followers of Rookmini's song that encouraged and led them. But gradually they grew bolder, more at their ease in this strange night, in which all things were novel and strange. Over the deeply resonant voices of the men the women's voices rose with a clear ring. And as, triumphantly, the men sang in a final chorus: "All together, men of the hills, men of the coast, men who live by the river, men who live in the rice-fields, all together we built the bridge!" the women sang in response: "We heard the stroke of the axe on the slopes, and the fall of darkly swaying trees we saw from afar. We heard, as if it had been the rolling of thunder, the bursting of the rock. Joyously we called to one another: 'Of the mountain and the mountain forest our men are

making a bridge!' Joyously the rice pounders at the rice-block made answer to the sounds of the work with the pounding of their pestles."

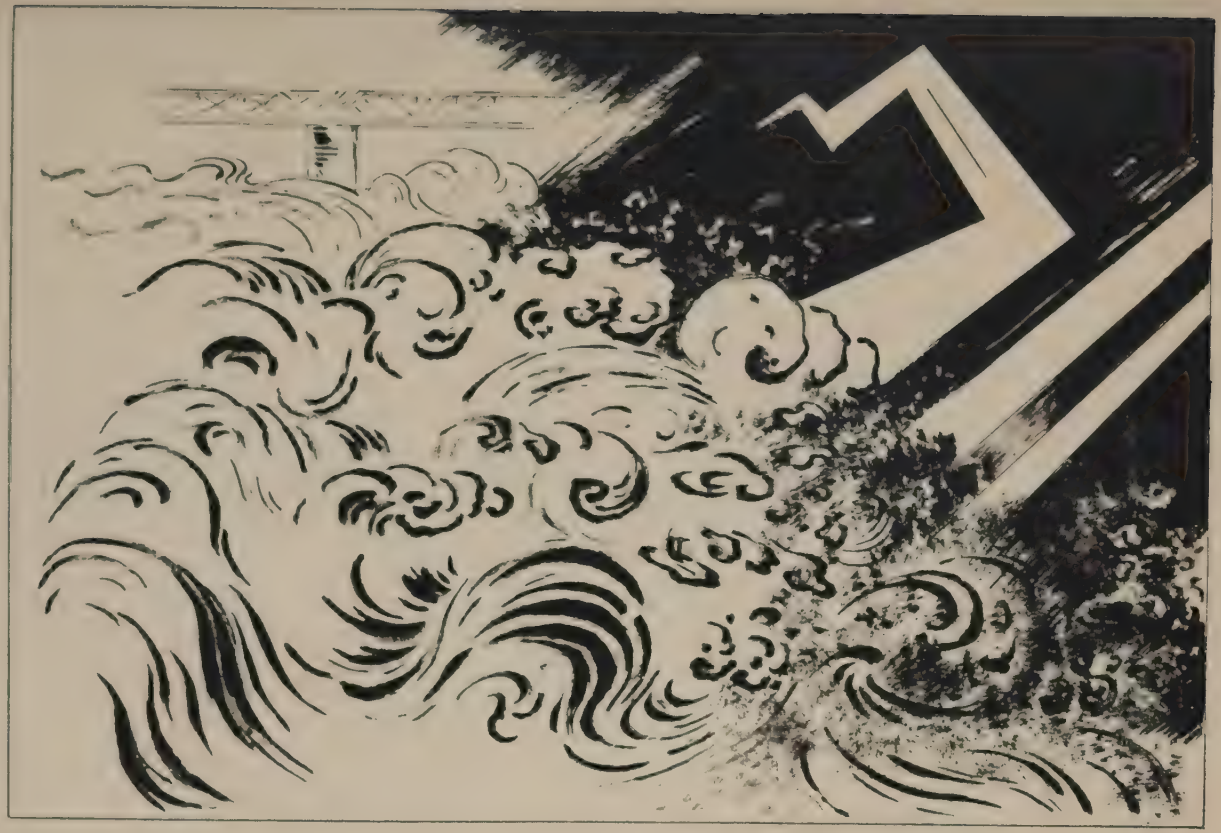
Then the alternating song of the deep voices and of the high voices paused. But, as after the many-tongued call of the bells along the river, the air still was softly stirred for a while with an after-resonance of harmony.

THE watchers of the second watch came back from the bridge; they said that the river rose no more. And the watchers of the last turn went.

Anew the gamelan began. From the melody that had accompanied the chorus, the ensemble of musical instruments passed to one of a different tone, and the multitude gazed at the poet-musician, bending forward with a listening inclination of the body, their faces raised; for now that which they most of all wished to hear was coming: the strife of the Builder of the Bridge with the Bandjir. The crowds at a festival are not so still before the lighted screen where the dalang shows forth the strife of Krisjna, the heavenly hero, with the wicked giant.

"The Tjikidool heard the voice of the Builder of the Bridge. He rose up in wrath. From his feet, over which the surf breaks, unto his head that lies on the Mountain of Storms, he foamed with rage. He drank the blackness of the heavens to gain him strength for the strife. He ate earth, swearing an oath that he would destroy the Bridge, that he would slay the Builder. To the Forest-King, the dark prince, he said: 'As the Gandaroowa carried Shiva, so, Lord of the great Solitude! I will carry thee. Together we will go to battle.' Astride on the Waterfall, the Forest challenged the Bridge and the Builder."

Sitoo Arab leapt to his feet. "The iron bridge was completed; we thought, to-morrow we will lower it on to the corner-stones; soon we shall celebrate the great festival of the completion! Then came the Bandjir!" As if they themselves had been working hurriedly at the hurried and precise work, as if they themselves had rejoiced in the approaching consummation, as if they themselves sat paralyzed by sudden terror, the multitude repeated with one voice: "Then came the Bandjir!" And that one anxious voice, a late echo of ancient terrors, quavered out, all alone: "And then came the Bandjir!"



The Bandjir

A new voice rang out, that had not yet been heard. It had a sound as strong and deep, as full of high tones and sudden booming depths, as water in a rocky ravine. "Through the nights and through the days the rain fell. Like a wall the rain encompassed us. There were no hills any more in the distance. There were no slopes any more near by, nor green woods, but only a twilight of waters, rain only and rain clouds. Rain flowed out of the roots of the forest, rain flowed out of the stones of the mountains, the firm ground was turned to rain. Our fields on the slope, green with sprouting rice, melted into rain. The young growth rose to meet the rain; together with the rain it sprang down the mountain slopes. The field and the fruit of the field were changed into a waterfall that leapt down the ravine!"

A second voice began: "Off the slopes the water fell down upon our village in the valley. Out of the river the water climbed up to us. Our footpaths became streams, our village green became a lake. The women wandered about weeping; they saw their household goods float away, they saw their houses shaking. With their babes wrapped in their carrying-scarves, they stood in the rain; they knew not where to hide themselves. The song which the threshers sing when they carry out the first rice from the rice-barn, singing that the threshing is a feast upon the river for the Bridal Pair of the Rice, the rice-block shall be their prao and the pestles their oars—the Song of the Threshing came true. Like a prao verily, the rice-block floated! The pestle floated like an oar when the oarsman is drowned."

The deep voice that was like the voice of the water itself, began again in its dull, resounding tones. "The northern slope of Goonoong Hitam fell in. Then the Rasamala fell! Like a thunder storm he fell, like the lightning and the cloud-burst! We saw it from afar, we people of Djalang Tiga. Black as a thunder-cloud he plunged into the ravine. Stones flew like a shower of hail."

Sitoo Arab cried: "We heard the thunder of the landslip! We had come together at dawn, all of us. The men stood along either bank of the river, from the bridge as far as to the great bend, and on the scaffolding we stood, as many as could find room to stand. The trees came floating round the bend. From the scaffolding we could see the river all dark with driftwood. It was as if the forest were floating upon it. From the banks the men grasped at the trees, thrusting out long hooks

to seize them. Those that they caught and pulled ashore, they made fast to the trees. Those that floated in the middle of the stream they could not attain, neither from the low bank of the north nor from the steep bank of the south.

"They drifted downstream. We saw them coming down toward the bridge, we who stood on the scaffolding. We waited: we stood ready to catch them on our long hooks. As they came near we pushed them away into the spaces between the supports. The trunks crashed against the piles, causing the scaffolding to stagger. At every shock it seemed as if it must break down, such a groaning and creaking there was, and such a swaying of piles and planks.

"But we looked at the Builder of the Bridge, standing in the middle of the scaffolding; he did not give way. And there was not one of us who gave way. He said: 'Men, stand firm! All of us together, we will save the bridge!' And we made answer: 'We stand firm! We will hold the bridge.' "

And the multitude cried: "We will hold the bridge!"

"A great deal of driftwood came down, a very great deal! The men on the southern bank seized and made fast, the men on the northern bank seized and made fast; we who stood on the bridge, we sent it drifting between the piles. And when it grew noon, and there was less of driftwood and less of the swaying and groaning of the scaffolding, we all thought: We have won!

"But then came the Rasamala! We saw him approaching round the bend of the river; black, ah! as a black rock was the great clump of his roots! Like a hill under which there is a deep cave, he loomed up above the river. The men along the banks from the bend of the river down to the bridge cried out with a great cry. Ah! how huge he was, huge beyond all thoughts! In all the years that we had seen him on the mountain, tallest of all the trees of the forest, high above all the others, by very much the highest of all, and had thought, 'As a mountain on the mountain is the Rasamala'—in all these years we had not known how huge in truth he was. Now we saw it! For far away as yet on the thither side of the bend was the crown, when the roots were already half way to the bridge. And when the crown came, then it was as if the slope of the southern bank suddenly advanced into the river, and a hill stood there where the water had been. Ah! the boughs made a darkness against

the sky! We looked at the Builder of the Bridge. Not a word he said; his face went white. Then he made a sign that all should leave the scaffolding. And when the last of us had gone, he went too, very slowly. When he had reached the bank, he turned and stood still, looking at the river and at the Rasamala; he stood without speaking or moving, as if turned to stone.

"The river rose, the river rose! Far out, the low-lying land was flooded. Like an island in the reeds the Ketapan hill stood, where the men still made a stand, catching at the drifting trunks with their hooks. Like a fleet of fishing praos that fishermen have moored to the shore of an island was the throng of trees tossing on the current, and all the flotsam of the river entangled among the branches. Then the Rasamala came, the black hill of roots! Slowly he drifted against the trees, and drifted a little farther, crowding in upon them, and lay still. Ah! We sighed with relief. He lay still!"

In the darkness the multitude murmured: "Ah! he lay still!"

Sitoo Arab threw up his head like a rearing horse. "The river rose, the river rose! The current thrust against the Rasamala. Slowly, very slowly, he drifted loose from amongst the trees. The men well knew that if he drifted out into the middle of the river, he would be thrust against the bridge: then all would be over! Desperately, with great shouts, they hurled grappling irons at him, even as, down beyond the southeastern islands, whalers hurl harpoons at a whale. The grapple caught in the trunk; then, as they pulled on the rope, it slid off again. The men muttered that some one should swim up to the Rasamala and fasten ropes to the biggest boughs; then, pulling together, all of us, we would drag him ashore. But who would have dared enter the river and swim through all that drift, tossing and hurtling on the current? I held a line, fastened to a coil of rope, ready for throwing, as we do for the salvage of a ship that is wrecked upon the rocks. But I knew only too well, none would dare—none!

"And the Rasamala, a black mountain, a hill and a forest upon a hill, drifted on. He covered half the river! Slowly he drifted, slowly. Again and again, with his huge roots and his huge boughs, he ran aground on the many sandbanks in the river and lay still a while, swaying as the current tugged at him. And the river, rising, rising, floated him again,

and again he drifted on, slowly, in the middle of the stream, straight on toward the bridge.

"The Radhèn Regent had come with the Wedana and all the Headmen of the villages, and many Hollanders also had come. For the whole district feared for the bridge. The Kandjeng Resident was there, and the Tooan Assistant Resident, and the Tooan Comptroller of Soombertingghi, and he of Kali Redjo, and he of Blora, and from the sugar-mills in the plain there came the Tooan Besar and the other Hollanders. They drove their carriages into the water up to the axles, and they called to one another across the water: 'It is all over! It is all over with the bridge!' The Tooan Besar of Wonoredjo stood up in his carriage and called out that he would give a cart and a bullock-team to whoever would dare to swim out to the Rasamala. But no one dared. Only Si-Badil of the Stone of the Sparrow-Hawks waded out into the water."

The multitude cried: "Si-Badil of Batoo Helang, the brave!" "Si-Badil, the robber!" "The captain of the men of the Black Face!" "Not for the cart and the bullocks, verily, did he make the venture. He ventured out of bravery, he the fearless one!" From all around there rose cries in praise of the bold leader of a gang of robbers, since long years now a convict in chains at work somewhere far away in a mine, and black with coal dust from head to foot, as he used to be black in the face with soot, when disguised for a nocturnal expedition.

Sitoo Arab cried: "He waded out into the stream, Si-Badil. But he looked upon the drifting wood, how it crowded and got jammed, and upon the Rasamala, far off in the midst of the stream. He stood still for a while and looked back at the bank, and then turned back. The Radhèn Regent said aloud, so that every one heard: 'A truly courageous man is Si-Badil! To do this thing, however, by Allah! it were not courage but madness. Death itself it is that is riding upon the river!' "

The darkling choir repeated: "Death itself it was that rode upon the river!"

Sitoo Arab threw up his arms. "Then, suddenly, he stood in the midst of us—he, the Builder of the Bridge! As a white lamp was his face, all pale, all alight. He threw off his clothes and stood shining. All of him was brightness; he shone. He entered the water, he waded in up to the knees, up to the hips, up to the shoulders. We held our breath as we looked at him swimming. His yellow head was seen amongst the

driftwood as in the season of change the sun is seen amongst the clouds. It shone out and was darkened again. Every time it disappeared, there was a sigh: 'Ah, he is drowned, the all-too-daring one!' And he rose up again, and there was a muttering: 'Ah, he will be caught between the crunching trees!' At one moment we saw him half out of the water, hanging on to a branch in the crown of a tree. He hung motionless, his head thrown back, and as we looked we saw his shoulder and his back grow red with blood. And when he sank again, he for a long time was not seen, and, drifting on, the Rasamala with his great boughs made a darkness, there where he had been. Now, surely, we thought, now surely he has perished, being wounded and exhausted; and the mountain of the Rasamala is over him! And women began to lament, weeping aloud.

"But suddenly the men on the southern bank cried out, with a cry that made the hills ring; and we saw him, far away, his face above the topmost branches of the Rasamala! He drifted, standing upright; he held himself to a tall bough as a man wrecked at sea holds himself to the ship's mast. And the people shouted as if they had gone mad with joy. They shouted, they leapt. They would have plunged into the river to be with him. He raised his arm aloft; I threw the line. A hundred of us dragged the Rasamala ashore. The bridge was saved!"

Sitoo Arab shouted as he had shouted in that moment of final triumph. And the multitude shouted with him as if they were part of that throng crowding the flooded bank for a sight of the formidable tree and of the naked shining man astride a great branch and steering for the shore with a roof-beam seized up out of the wreck adrift on the river. Even Hadji Moosa cried out, even the women under the banyan.

The dalang raised his hand; all the gamelan-players together began a stately music. And he himself, the poet-musician, raised with ringing voice the song of victory. It echoed along the dark river.

"Terrible the Dark Prince came rushing on, riding his terrible steed. His head was over the land even as a darkening of the sun. The plain shook because of his charger's hoof-beats and of the snorting of his nostrils. He held his club raised on high against the Builder and the Bridge. He challenged his enemy with a fearful shouting.

"The Builder of the Bridge strode toward him. He stood alone. He had no weapon. With his hands he seized the unapproachable one. He

tore him from his rearing charger, he flung him to earth, he planted his foot upon his breast, he bound him with bonds not to be broken. Low lay his proud head, that had made men senseless with terror; powerless lay his hundred arms, that had spread night over the land. As the sun stands shining above the black clouds, even so the Builder stood shining above the King of the Forest. As the rainbow in dark skies stood the Bridge."

The song streamed in an ample rhythm, full and strong. The rumour of the river, gradually grown less tumultuous, was as another voice among the many, deep voices and high, that joined in with the one ringing out clearest of all, the voice of the poet-musician. Underneath the beats of the long drum, resoundingly reiterated, the rushing of the water was an even sound, continuous and full.

THE ending song closed the vigil as the beginning song had opened it. Like some pageant moving through the night, a long procession of voices, the story celebrating the building of the bridge and the deed dared by the Builder had passed. Even as, in a pageant, gorgeous horsemen ride, as priests tread gravely with earnest eyes, and armed men stride proudly on; as the bearers of the princely heirlooms, and the jewels, and the symbols of riches, long life, and power follow in well-ordered ranks, and women two and two, holding one another by the hand, bear offerings of flowers, and maidens trip, decked for the dance, and, waving from tall staffs, a glitter of many banners flutters above the chattering multitude—even thus the verses of the poet-musician and the tales of old times told by Hadji Moosa and the lament of the ancient ones of the forest had passed by, even thus Sitoo Arab's exultation and boasting; and amidst the outcries and the laughter of the multitude, the insults and repartees, the turbulent voices, the pantoons walked in fair couples. And all along the way, in light festoons that ended in a stately triumphal arch, there was the music.

The night was over. With quenched torches the watchers of the last watch returned from the river banks and from the bridge. They said that the river was falling.

The thin chill that comes before dawn was in the air; shivering, men and women, as they rose from the dark earth, drew their garments closer about them. In the pale glamour that was almost light, village neighbours recognized one another, faces appeared where only voices had been. Now for the first time the many knew how many they had been by the bridge!

The women waked their children, who, soft and heavy and warm, leaned against them, deep in sleep, and, half in a dream still, lay for a moment with round open eyes before they rose, and, with hand on mother's carrying scarf, trotted after her to the river for the morning bath.

Market folk came down from the hill, the narrower stream of early morning after the broad stream of night. On the high road through the middle of the forest a sparkling medley of colours gay as flowers moved through the chequered sunlight. The first train came rushing up out of the plain; its flying rattle-run over the bridge shook awake all things that live by day.

The night had been beautiful; it was over. Now everyday things began again. Upon the highway into the plain, the people, as they followed one another in long files, were talking of the market, and of the festival where the dalang was to act a wayang play, and of the arrival of the pilgrims from Mecca.

But more than one looked back at the bridge. Over the turgid river, all dark with flotsam, it reared its shining curves, radiant in the purple light of dawn. It seemed other than it had been up to this night: fairer.

Soomarti, who, in the midst of a press of boys and girls, walked with the dalang and his musicians, sang to the new music of that night, for which as yet no words had been found, a new pantoon; all the young folk joined in.

"For the feet of market folk are many bridges; they stretch from one side of the river to the other.

"For the hearts of brothers is our bridge; it stretches from to-day to to-morrow."

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

ST. THOMAS COLLEGE
LIBRARY

WITHDRAWN
UST
Libraries

Wit, Augusta de. 39145

Island-India.